SRI AUROBINDO AND THE MOTHER
on Food and Life

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SRI AUROBINDO AND THE MOTHER

ON

# FOOD AND LIFE

*A Compilation*

SRI AUROBINDO ASHRAM
PONDICHERRY
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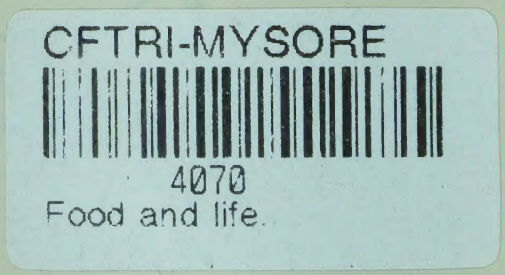


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1957

# *FOREWORD*

*Countless are the books and articles on the relation of food to the physical existence of the human body, infinite is the literature dealing with the myriad aspects of human life, but very little has been written on the subtle interplay between food and life on man's higher planes of consciousness and functioning. This compilation of the deep-probing thoughts of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother on a subject too long neglected is in a class by itself.*

*Published in commemoration of the Fifteenth World Vegetarian Congress, convened in India, these essays and reflections far transcend the limited horizon of bread and butter vegetarianism. They range over the illimitable spheres of man's multiple planes of being, none of which are immune to the influence of the food consumed by us, and even less to the impact of our thoughts in relation to food.*

*By lifting the very concept and meaning of vegetarianism to planes of sublime inspiration and interpretation, Sri Aurobindo and the Mother throw celestial light on the profound implications of this vital problem and bring to it new dimensions of revelation.*

*Pondicherry, India.* *Alexander Markey*
*November,* 1957.

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# SRI AUROBINDO

## I

## Life as a Whole

To climb to higher altitudes, to get a greater scope, to transform his lower nature—this is always a natural impulse of man as soon as he has made his place for himself in the physical and vital world of earth and has a little leisure to consider his further possibilities. It must be so not because of any false and pitiful imaginative illusion in him, but, first, because he is the imperfect, still developing mental being and must strive for more development, for perfection, and still more because he is capable, unlike other terrestrial creatures, of becoming aware of what is deeper than mind, of the soul within him, and of what is above the mind, of Supermind, of Spirit, capable of opening to it, admitting it, rising towards it, taking hold of it. It is in his human nature, in all human nature, to exceed itself by conscious evolution, to climb beyond what he is. Not individuals only, but in time the race also, in a general rule of being and living if not in all its members, can have the hope, if it develops a sufficient will, to rise beyond the imperfections of our present very undivine nature and to ascend at least to a superior humanity, to rise nearer, even if it cannot absolutely reach, to a divine manhood or supermanhood.

## 2. The Present Crisis and Its True Solution

At present mankind is undergoing an evolutionary crisis in which is concealed a choice of its destiny; for a stage has been reached in which the human mind has achieved in certain directions an enormous development while in others it stands arrested and bewildered and can no longer find its way. A structure of the external life has been raised up by man's ever-active mind and life-will, a structure of an un-

manageable hugeness and complexity, for the service of his mental, vital, physical claims and urges, a complex political, social, administrative, economic, cultural machinery, an organised collective means for his intellectual, sensational, aesthetic and material satisfaction. Man has created a system of civilisation which has become too big for his limited mental capacity and understanding and his still more limited spiritual and moral capacity to utilise and manage, a too dangerous servant of his blundering ego and its appetites. For no greater seeing mind, no intuitive soul of knowledge has yet come to his surface of consciousness which could make this basic fullness of life a condition for the free growth of something that exceeded it. This new fullness of the means of life might be, by its power for a release from the incessant unsatisfied stress of his economic and physical needs, an opportunity for the full pursuit of other and greater aims surpassing the material existence, for the discovery of a higher truth and good and beauty, for the discovery of a greater and diviner spirit which would intervene and use life for a higher perfection of the being : but it is being used instead for the multiplication of new wants and an aggressive expansion of the collective ego. At the same time science has put at his disposal many potencies of the universal Force and has made the life of humanity materially one; but what uses this universal Force is a little human individual or communal ego with nothing universal in its light of knowledge or its movements, no inner sense or power which would create in this physical drawing together of the human world a true life unity, a mental unity or a spiritual oneness. All that is there is a chaos of clashing mental ideas, urges of individual and collective physical want and need, vital claims and desires, impulses of an ignorant life-push, hungers and calls for life satis-

faction of individuals, classes, nations, a rich fungus of political and social and economic nostrums and notions, a hustling medley of slogans and panaceas for which men are ready to oppress and be oppressed, to kill and be killed, to impose them somehow or other by the immense and too formidable means placed at their disposal, in the belief that this is their way out to something ideal. The evolution of human mind and life must necessarily lead towards an increasing universality; but on a basis of ego and segmenting and dividing mind this opening to the universal can only create a vast pullulation of unaccorded ideas and impulses, a surge of enormous powers and desires, a chaotic mass of unassimilated and intermixed mental, vital and physical material of a larger existence which, because it is not taken up by a creative harmonising light of the spirit, must welter in a universalised confusion and discord out of which it is impossible to build a greater harmonic life. Man has harmonised life in the past by organised ideation and limitation; he has created societies based on fixed ideas or fixed customs, a fixed cultural system or an organic life-system, each with its own order; the throwing of all these into the melting-pot of a more and more intermingling life and a pouring in of ever new ideas and motives and facts and possibilities call for a new, a greater consciousness to meet and master the increasing potentialities of existence and harmonise them. Reason and science can only help by standardising, by fixing everything into an artificially arranged and mechanised unity of material life. A greater whole-being, whole-knowledge, whole-power is needed to weld all into a greater unity of whole-life.

## Alternative Solutions

A rational and scientific formula of the vitalistic and materialistic human being and his life, a search for a perfected economic society and the democratic cultus of the average man are all that the modern mind presents us in this crisis as a light for its solution. Whatever the truth supporting these ideas, this is clearly not enough to meet the need of a humanity which is missioned to evolve beyond itself or, at any rate, if it is to live, must evolve far beyond anything that it at present is. A life-instinct in the race and in the average man himself has felt the inadequacy and has been driving towards a reversal of values or a discovery of new values and a transfer of life to a new foundation. This has taken the form of an attempt to find a simple and ready-made basis of unity, mutuality, harmony for the common life, to enforce it by a suppression of the competitive clash of egos and so to arrive at a life of identity for the community in place of a life of difference. But to realise these desirable ends the means adopted have been the forcible and successful materialisation of a few restricted ideas or slogans enthroned to the exclusion of all other thought, the suppression of the mind of the individual, a mechanised compression of the elements of life, a mechanised unity and drive of the life-force, a coercion of man by the State, the substitution of the communal for the individual ego. The communal ego is idealised as the soul of the nation, the race, the community; but this is a colossal and may turn out to be a fatal error. A forced and imposed unanimity of mind, life, action raised to their highest tension under the drive of something which is thought to be greater, the collective soul, the collective life, is the formula found. But this obscure collective being is not the soul or self of the commun-

ity; it is a life-force that rises from the subconscient and, if denied the light of guidance by the reason, can be driven only by dark massive forces which are powerful but dangerous for the race because they are alien to the conscious evolution of which man is the trustee and bearer. It is not in this direction that evolutionary Nature has pointed mankind; this is a reversion towards something that she had left behind her.

Another solution that is attempted reposes still on the materialistic reason and a unified organisation of the economic life of the race; but the method that is being employed is the same, a forced compression and imposed unanimity of mind and life and a mechanical organisation of the communal existence. A unanimity of this kind can only be maintained by a compression of all freedom of thought and life, and that must bring about either the efficient stability of a termite civilisation or a drying up of the springs of life and a swift or slow decadence. It is through the growth of consciousness that the collective soul and its life can become aware of itself and develop; the free play of mind and life is essential for the growth of consciousness : for mind and life are the soul's only instrumentation until a higher instrumentation develops; they must not be inhibited in their action or rendered rigid, unplastic and unprogressive. The difficulties or disorders engendered by the growth of the individual mind and life cannot be healthily removed by the suppression of the individual; the true cure can only be achieved by his progression to a greater consciousness in which he is fulfilled and perfected.

An alternative solution is the development of an enlightened reason and will of the normal man consenting to a new socialised life in which he will subordinate his ego for the sake of the right arrangement of the life of the community. If we

inquire how this radical change is to be brought about, two agencies seem to be suggested, the agency of a greater and better mental knowledge, right ideas, right information, right training of the social and civic individual and the agency of a new social machinery which will solve everything by the magic of the social machine cutting humanity into a better pattern. But it has not been found in experience, whatever might have once been hoped, that education and intellectual training by itself can change man; it only provides the human individual and collective ego with better information and a more efficient machinery for its self-affirmation, but leaves it the same unchanged human ego. Nor can human mind and life be cut into perfection—even into what is thought to be perfection, a constructed substitute,—by any kind of social machinery; matter can be so cut, thought can be so cut, but in our human existence matter and thought are only instruments for the soul and the life-force. Machinery cannot form the soul and life-force into standardised shapes; it can at best coerce them, make soul and mind inert and stationary and regulate the life's outward action; but if this is to be effectively done, coercion and compression of the mind and life are indispensable and that again spells either unprogressive stability or decadence. The reasoning mind with its logical practicality has no other way of getting the better of Nature's ambiguous and complex movements than a regulation and mechanisation of mind and life. If that is done, the soul of humanity will either have to recover its freedom and growth by a revolt and a destruction of the machine into whose grip it has been cast or escape by a withdrawal into itself and a rejection of life. Man's true way out is to discover his soul and its self-force and instrumentation and replace by it both the mechanisation of mind and the

ignorance and disorder of life-nature. But there would be little room and freedom for such a movement of self-discovery and self-effectuation in a closely regulated and mechanised social existence.

There is the possibility that in the swing back from a mechanistic idea of life and society the human mind may seek refuge in a return to the religious idea and a society governed or sanctioned by religion. But organised religion, though it can provide a means of inner uplift for the individual and preserve in it or behind it a way for his opening to spiritual experience, has not changed human life and society; it could not do so because, in governing society, it had to compromise with the lower parts of life and could not insist on the inner change of the whole being; it could insist only on a credal adherence, a formal acceptance of its ethical standards and a conformity to institution, ceremony and ritual. Religion so conceived can give a religio-ethical colour or surface tinge,—sometimes, if it maintains a strong kernel of inner experience, it can generalise to some extent an incomplete spiritual tendency; but it does not transform the race, it cannot create a new principle of the human existence. A total spiritual direction given to the whole life and the whole nature can alone lift humanity beyond itself. Another possible conception akin to the religious solution is the guidance of society by men of spiritual attainment, the brotherhood or unity of all in the faith or in the discipline, the spiritualisation of life and society by the taking up of the old machinery of life into such a unification or inventing a new machinery. This too has been attempted before without success; it was the original founding idea of more than one religion : but the human ego and vital nature were too strong for a religious idea working on the mind and by the mind to overcome its resistance.

It is only the full emergence o the soul, the full descent of the native light and power of the Spirit and the consequent replacement or transformation and uplifting of our insufficient mental and vital nature by a spiritual and supramental supernature that can effect this evolutionary miracle.

At first sight this insistence on a radical change of nature might seem to put off all the hope of humanity to a distant evolutionary future; for the transcendence of our normal human nature, a transcendence of our mental, vital and physical being, has the appearance of an endeavour too high and difficult and at present, for man as he is, impossible. Even if it were so, it would still remain the sole possibility for the transmutation of life; for to hope for a true change of human life without a change of human nature is an irrational and unspiritual proposition; it is to ask for something unnatural and unreal, an impossible miracle. But what is demanded by this change is not something altogether distant, alien to our existence and radically impossible; for what has to be developed is there in our being and not something outside it: what evolutionary Nature presses for, is an awakening to the knowledge of self, the discovery of self, the manifestation of the self and spirit within us and the release of its self-knowledge, its self-power, its native self-instrumentation. It is, besides, a step for which the whole of evolution has been a preparation and which is brought closer at each crisis of human destiny when the mental and vital evolution of the being touches a point where intellect and vital force reach some acme of tension and there is a need either for them to collapse, to sink back into a torpor of defeat or a repose of unprogressive quiescence or to rend their way through the veil against which they are straining. What is necessary is that there should be a turn in humanity felt by some or many

towards the vision of this change, a feeling of its imperative need, the sense of its possibility, the will to make it possible in themselves and to find the way. That trend is not absent and it must increase with the tension of the crisis in human world-destiny; the need of an escape or a solution, the feeling that there is no other solution than the spiritual cannot but grow and become more imperative under the urgency of critical circumstance.

### 3. The Spiritual Essence of Religion

It is true in a sense that religion should be the dominant thing in life, its light and law, but religion as it should be and is in its inner nature, its fundamental law of being, a seeking after God, the cult of spirituality, the opening of the deepest life of the soul to the indwelling Godhead, the eternal Omnipresence. On the other hand, it is true that religion when it identifies itself only with a creed, a cult, a Church, a system of ceremonial forms, may well become a retarding force and there may therefore arise a necessity for the human spirit to reject its control over the varied activities of life. There are two aspects of religion, true religion and religionism. True religion is spiritual religion, that which seeks to live in the spirit, in what is beyond the intellect, beyond the aesthetic and ethical and practical being of man, and to inform and govern these members of our being by the higher light and law of the spirit. Religionism on the contrary entrenches itself in some narrow pietistic exaltation of the lower members or lays exclusive stress on intellectual dogmas, forms and ceremonies, on some fixed and rigid moral code, on some religio-political or religio-social system. Not that these

things are altogether negligible or that they must be unworthy or unnecessary or that a spiritual religion need disdain the aid of forms, ceremonies, creeds or systems. On the contrary, they are needed by man because the lower members have to be exalted and raised before they can be fully spiritualised, before they can directly feel the spirit and obey its law. An intellectual formula is often needed by the thinking and reasoning mind, a form or ceremony by the aesthetic temperament or other parts of the infrarational being, a set moral code by man's vital nature, in their turn towards the inner life. But these things are aids and supports, not the essence; precisely because they belong to the rational and infrarational parts, they can be nothing more and, if too blindly insisted on, may even hamper the suprarational light. Such as they are, they have to be offered to man and used by him, but not to be imposed on him as his sole law by a forced and inflexible domination. In the use of them toleration and free permission of variation is the first rule which should be observed. The spiritual essence of religion is alone the one thing supremely needful, the thing to which we have always to hold and subordinate to it every other element or motive.

## 4. The Individual, the Community and Humanity

The law for the individual is to perfect his individuality by free development from within, but to respect and to aid and be aided by the same free development in others. His law is to harmonise his life with the life of the social aggregate and to pour himself out as a force for growth and perfection on humanity. The law for the community or

nation is equally to perfect its corporate existence by a free development from within, aiding and taking full advantage of that of the individual, but to respect, and to aid and be aided by the same free development of other communities and nations. Its law is to harmonise its life with that of the human aggregate and to pour itself out as a force for growth and perfection on humanity. The law for humanity is to pursue its upward evolution towards the finding and expression of the Divine in the type of mankind, taking full advantage of the free development and gains of all individuals and nations and groupings of men, to work towards the day when mankind may be really and not only ideally one divine family, but even then, when it has succeeded in unifying itself, to respect, aid and be aided by the free growth and activity of its individuals and constituent aggregates.

## 5. The Trend Towards Human Unity

The social evolution of the human race is necessarily a development of the relations between three constant factors, individuals, communities of various sorts and mankind. Each seeks its own fulfilment and satisfaction, but each is compelled to develop them not independently but in relation to the others. The first natural aim of the individual must be his own inner growth and fullness and its expression in his outer life; but this he can only accomplish through his relations with other individuals, to the various kinds of community—religious, social, cultural and political—to which he belongs and to the idea and need of humanity at large. The community must seek its own fulfilment, but whatever its strength of mass consciousness and col-

lective organisation, can accomplish its growth only through its individuals under the stress of the circumstances set forth by its environment and subject to the conditions imposed by its relations to other communities and individuals and to humanity at large. Mankind as a whole has at present no consciously organised common life; it has only an inchoate organisation determined much more by circumstances than by human intelligence and will. And yet the idea and the fact of our common human existence, nature, destiny has always exercised its strong influence on human thought and action. One of the chief preoccupations of ethics and religion has been the obligations of man to mankind. The pressure of the large movements and fluctuations of the race has always affected the destinies of its separate communities and there has been a constant return pressure of separate communities—social, cultural, political, religious to expand and include, if it might be, the totality of the race. And if or when the whole of humanity arrives at an organised common life and seeks a common fulfilment and satisfaction, it can only do it by means of the relation of this whole to its parts and by the aid of the expanding life of individual human beings and of the communities whose progress constitutes the larger terms of the life of the race.

Nature works always through these three terms and none of them can be abolished. She starts from the visible manifestation of the one and the many, from the totality and its constituent units and creates intermediary unities between the two without which there can be no full development either of the totality or of the units. In the life-type itself she creates always the three terms of genus, species and individual. But while in the animal life she is satisfied to separate rigidly and group summarily, in the human she

strives, on the contrary, to override the divisions she has made and lead the whole kind to the sense of unity and the realisation of oneness. Man's communities are formed not so much by the instinctive herding together of a number of individuals of the same genus or species as by local association, community of interests and community of ideas; and these limits tend always to be overcome in the widening of human thoughts and sympathies brought about by the closer intermingling of races, nations, interests, ideas, cultures. Still, if overcome in their separatism, they are not abolished in their fact, because they repose on an essential principle of Nature,—diversity in unity. Therefore it would seem that the ideal or ultimate aim of Nature must be to develop the individual and all individuals to their full capacity, to develop the community and all communities to the full expression of that many-sided existence and potentiality which their differences were created to express, and to evolve the united life of mankind to its full common capacity and satisfaction, not by suppression of the fullness of life of the individual or the smaller commonalty, but by full advantage taken of the diversity which they develop. This would seem the soundest way to increase the total riches of mankind and throw them into a fund of common possession and enjoyment.

## 6. The Necessity of a World State

The question now put by evolving Nature to mankind is whether its existing international system, if system it can be called, a sort of provisional order maintained with constant evolutionary or revolutionary changes, cannot be replaced by

a willed and thought-out fixed arrangement, a true system, eventually a real unity serving all the common interests of the earth's peoples. An original welter and chaos with its jumble of forces forming, wherever it could, larger or smaller masses of civilisation and order which were in danger of crumbling or being shaken to pieces by attacks from the outer chaos was the first attempt at cosmos successfully arrived at by the genius of humanity. This was finally replaced by something like an international system with the elements of what could be called international law or fixed habits of intercommunication and interchange which allowed the nations to live together in spite of antagonisms and conflicts, a security alternating with precariousness and peril and permitting of too many ugly features, however local, of oppression, bloodshed, revolt and disorder, not to speak of wars which sometimes devasted large areas of the globe. The indwelling deity who presides over the destiny of the race has raised in man's mind and heart the idea, the hope of a new order which will replace the old unsatisfactory order, and substitute for it conditions of the world's life which will in the end have a reasonable chance of establishing permanent peace and well-being. This would for the first time turn into an assured fact the ideal of human unity which, cherished by a few, seemed for so long a noble chimera ; then might be created a firm ground of peace and harmony and even a free room for the realisation of the highest human dreams, for the perfectibility of the race, a perfect society, a higher upward evolution of the human soul and human nature. It is for the men of our days and, at the most, of tomorrow to give the answer.

* *

The ultimate result must be the formation of a World State and the most desirable form of it would be a federation of free nationalities in which all subjection or forced inequality and subordination of one to another would have disappeared and, though some might preserve a greater natural influence, all would have an equal status. A confederacy would give the greatest freedom to the nations constituting the World-State, but this might give too much room for fissiparous or centrifugal tendencies to operate; a federal order would then be the most desirable. All else would be determined by the course of events and by general agreement or the shape given by the ideas and necessities that may grow up in the future. A world-union of this kind would have the greatest chances of long survival or permanent existence. This is a mutable world and uncertainties and dangers might assail or trouble for a time; the formed structure might be subjected to revolutionary tendencies as new ideas and forces emerged and produced their effect on the general mind of humanity, but the essential step would have been taken and the future of the race assured or at least the present era overpassed in which it is threatened and disturbed by unsolved needs and difficulties, precarious conditions, immense upheavals, huge and sanguinary world-wide conflicts and the threat of others to come. The ideal of human unity would be no longer an unfulfilled ideal but an accomplished fact and its preservation given into the charge of the united human peoples. Its future destiny would lie on the knees of the gods and, if the gods have a use for the continued existence of the race, may be left to lie there safe.

## 7. The Indian Spirit

Its real keynote is the tendency of spiritual realisation, not cast at all into any white monotone, but many-faceted, many-coloured, as supple in its adaptability as it is intense in its highest pitches. The note of spirituality is dominant, initial, constant, always recurrent; it is the support of all the rest. The first age of India's greatness was a spiritual age when she sought passionately for the truth of existence through the intuitive mind and through an inner experience and interpretation both of the psychic and the physical existence. The stamp put on her by that beginning she has never lost, but rather always enriched it with fresh spiritual experience and discovery at each step of the national life. Even in her hour of decline it was the one thing she could never lose.

But this spiritual tendency does not shoot upward only to the abstract, the hidden and the intangible; it casts its rays downward and outward to embrace the multiplicities of thought and the richness of life. Therefore the second long epoch of India's greatness was an age of the intellect, the ethical sense, the dynamic will in action enlightened to formulate and govern life in the lustre of spiritual truth. After the age of the Spirit, the age of the *Dharma*; after the *Veda* and *Upanishads*, the heroic centuries of action and social formation, typal construction and thought and philosophy, when the outward forms of Indian life and culture were fixed in their large lines and even their later developments were being determined in the seed. The great classical age of Sanskrit culture was the flowering of this intellectuality into curiosity of detail in the refinements of scholarship, science, art, literature, politics, sociology, mundane

life. We see at this time too the sounding not only of aesthetic, but of emotional and sensuous, even of vital and sensual experience. But the old spirituality reigned behind all this mental and all this vital activity, and its later period, the post-classical, saw a lifting up of the whole lower life and an impressing upon it of the values of the spirit. This was the sense of the *Puranic* and *Tantric* systems and the religions of *Bhakti*. Later *Vaishnavism*, the last fine flower of the Indian spirit, was in its essence the taking up of the aesthetic, emotional and sensuous being into the service of the spiritual. It completed the curve of the cycle.

* *

Out of this awakening vision and impulse the Indian renaissance is arising, and that must determine its future tendency. The recovery of the old spiritual knowledge and experience in all its splendour, depth and fullness is its first, most essential work; the flowing of this spirituality into new forms of philosophy, literature, art, science and critical knowledge is the second; and original dealing with modern problems in the light of Indian spirit and the endeavour to formulate a greater synthesis of a spiritualised society is the third and most difficult. Its success on these three lines will be the measure of its help to the future of humanity.

## 8. Integral Living

Our gain in becoming more perfect mental beings is that we get to the possibility of a subtler, higher and wider existence, consciousness, force, happiness and delight of being;

in proportion as we rise in the scale of mind, a greater power of these things comes to us : our mental consciousness acquires for itself at the same time more vision and power and more subtlety and plasticity, and we are able to embrace more of the vital and physical existence itself, to know it better, to use it better, to give it nobler values, a broader range, a more sublimated action,—an extended scale, higher issues. Man is in his characteristic power of nature a mental being, but in the first steps of his emergence he is more of the mentalised animal, preoccupied like the animal with his bodily existence; he employs his mind for the uses, interests, desires of the life and the body, as their servant and minister, not yet as their sovereign and master. It is as he grows in mind and in proportion as his mind asserts its selfhood and independence against the tyranny of life and matter, that he grows in stature. On one side, mind by its emancipation controls and illumines the life and physicality; on the other, the purely mental aims, occupations, pursuits of knowledge begin to get a value. The mind liberated from a lower control and preoccupation introduces into life a government, an uplifting, a refinement, a finer balance and harmony; the vital and physical movements are directed and put into order, transformed even as far as they can be by a mental agency; they are taught to be the instruments of reason and obedient to an enlightened will, an ethical perception and an aesthetic intelligence : the more this can be accomplished, the more the race becomes truly human, a race of mental beings.

It is this perception of life that was put in front by the Greek thinkers, and it is a vivid flowering in the sunlight of this ideal that imparts so great a fascination to Hellenic life and culture. In later times this perception was lost and,

when it came back, it returned much diminished, mixed with more turbid elements : the perturbation of a spiritual ideal imperfectly grasped by the understanding and not at all realised in the life's practice but present with its positive and negative mental and moral influences, and over against it the pressure of a dominant, an inordinate vital urge which could not get its free self-satisfied movement, stood in the way of the sovereignty of the mind and the harmony of life, its realised beauty and balance. An opening to higher ideals, a greater range of life was gained, but the elements of a new idealism were only cast into its action as an influence, could not dominate and transform it and, finally, the spiritual endeavour, thus ill-understood and unrealised, was thrown aside : its moral effects remained, but, deprived of the sustaining spiritual element, dwindled towards ineffectivity; the vital urge, assisted by an immense development of physical intelligence, became the preoccupation of the race. An imposing increase of a certain kind of knowledge and efficiency was the first result; the most recent outcome has been a perilous spiritual ill-health and a vast disorder.

For mind itself is not enough; even its largest play of intelligence creates only a qualified half-light. A surface mental knowledge of the physical universe is a still more imperfect guide; for the thinking animal it might be enough, but not for a race of mental beings in labour of a spiritual evolution. Even the truth of physical things cannot be entirely known, nor can the right use of our material existence be discovered by physical Science and an outward knowledge alone or made possible by the mastery of physical and mechanical processes alone : to know, to use rightly we must go beyond the truth of physical phenomenon and process, we must know what is within and behind it. For we are not

merely embodied minds; there is a spiritual being, a spiritual principle, a spiritual plane of Nature. Into that we have to heighten our force of consciousness, to widen by that still more largely, even universally and infinitely, our range of being and our field of action, to take up by that our lower life and use it for greater ends and on a larger plan, in the light of the spiritual truth of existence. Our labour of mind and struggle of life cannot come to any solution until we have gone beyond the obsessing lead of an inferior Nature, integralised our natural being in the being and consciousness, learned to utilise our natural instruments by the force and for the joy of the Spirit. Then only can the constitutional ignorance, the ignorance of the real build of our existence from which we suffer, change into a true and effective knowledge of our being and becoming. For what we are is spirit, —at present using mind predominantly, life and body subordinately, with matter for our original field but not our only field of experience; but this is only at present. Our imperfect mental instrumentation is not the last word of our possibilities; for there are in us, dormant or invisibly and imperfectly active, other principles beyond mind and closer to the spiritual nature, there are more direct powers and luminous instruments, there is a higher status, there are greater ranges of dynamic action than those that belong to our present physical, vital and mental existence. These can become our own status, part of our being, they can be principles, powers and instruments of our own enlarged nature. But for that it is not enough to be satisfied with a vague or an ecstatic ascent into spirit or a formless exaltation through the touch of its infinities; their principle has to evolve, as life has evolved, as mind has evolved, and organise its own instrumentation, its own satisfaction. Then we shall

possess the true constitution of our being and we shall have conquered the Ignorance.

The conquest of our constitutional ignorance cannot be complete, cannot become integrally dynamic, if we have not conquered our psychological ignorance; for the two are bound up together. Our psychological ignorance consists in a limitation of our self-knowledge to that little wave or superficial stream of our being which is the conscient waking self. This part of our being is an original flux of formless or only half-formulated movements carried on in an automatic continuity, supported and held together by an active surface memory and a passive underlying consciousness in its flow from moment to moment of time, organised and interpreted by our reason and our witnessing and participating intelligence. Behind it is an occult existence and energy of our secret being without which the superficial consciousness and activity could not have existed or acted. In Matter only an activity is manifest, inconscient in the outside of things which is all we know; for the indwelling Consciousness in Matter is secret, subliminal, not manifested in the inconscient form and the involved energy: but in us consciousness has become partly manifest, partly awake. But this consciousness is hedged and imperfect; it is bound by its habitual self-limitation and moves in a restricted circle,—except when there are flashes, intimations or upsurgings from the secrecy within us which break the limits of the formation or flow beyond them or widen the circle. But these occasional visitations cannot enlarge us far beyond our present capacities, are not enough to revolutionise our status. That can only be done if we can bring into it the higher undeveloped lights and powers potential in our being and get them consciously and normally into

play; for this we must be able to draw freely from those ranges of our being to which they are native but which are at present subconscient or rather secretly intraconscient and circumconscient or else superconscient to us. Or,—the yet more that is also possible,—we must enter into these inner and higher parts of ourselves by an inward plunge or disciplined penetration and bring back with us to the surface their secrets. Or, achieving a still more radical change of our consciousness, we must learn to live within and no longer on the surface and be and act from the inner depths and from a soul that has become sovereign over the nature.

# II

# Food and Life

## 1. The Law of Hunger in Life

Life, says the *Upanishad*, is Hunger who is Death, and by this Hunger who is Death, *aśanaya mṛtyuḥ*, the material world has been created. For Life here assumes as its mould material substance, and material substance is Being infinitely divided and seeking infinitely to aggregate itself; between these two impulses of infinite division and infinite aggregation the material existence of the universe is constituted. The attempt of the individual, the living atom, to maintain and aggrandise itself is the whole sense of Desire; a physical, vital, moral, mental increase by a more and more all-embracing experience, a more and more all-embracing possession, absorption, assimilation, enjoyment is the inevitable, fundamental, ineradicable impulse of Existence, once divided and individualised, yet ever secretly conscious of its all-embracing, all-possessing infinity. The impulse to realise that secret consciousness is the spur of the cosmic Divine, the lust of the embodied Self within every individual creature; and it is inevitable, just, salutary that it should seek to realise it first in the terms of life by an increasing growth and expansion. In the physical world this can only be done by feeding on the environment, by aggrandising oneself through the absorption of others or of what is possessed by others; and this necessity is the universal justification of Hunger in all its forms. Still what devours, must also be devoured; for the law of interchange, of action and reaction, of limited capacity and therefore of a final exhaustion and succumbing governs all life in the physical world.

In the conscious mind that which was still only a vital hunger in subconscious life, transforms itself into higher forms; hunger in the vital parts becomes craving of Desire in the mentalised life, straining of Will in the intellectual or thinking life. This movement of desire must and ought to continue until the individual has grown sufficiently so that he can now at last become master of himself and, by increasing union with the Infinite, possessor of his universe. Desire is the lever by which the divine Life-principle effects its end of self-affirmation in the universe and the attempt to extinguish it in the interests of inertia is a denial of the divine Life-principle, a Will-not-to-be which is necessarily ignorance; for one cannot cease to be individually except by being infinitely. Desire too can only cease rightly by becoming the desire of the infinite and satisfying itself with a supernal fulfilment and an infinite satisfaction in the all-possessing bliss of the Infinite. Meanwhile it has to progress from the type of a mutually devouring hunger to the type of a mutual giving, of an increasingly joyous sacrifice of interchange—the individual gives himself to other individuals and receives them back in exchange; the lower gives itself to the higher and the higher to the lower so that they may be fulfilled in each other; the human gives itself to the Divine and the Divine to the human; the All in the individual gives itself to the All in the universe and receives its realised universality as a divine recompense. Thus the law of Hunger must give place progressively to the law of Love, the law of Division to the law of Unity, the law of Death to the law of Immortality. Such is the necessity, such the justification, such the culmination and self-fulfilment of the Desire that is at work in the universe.

## 2. The Divine Body

A divine life in a divine body is the formula of the ideal that we envisage. But what will be the divine body ? What will be the nature of this body, its structure, the principle of its activity, the perfection that distinguishes it from the limited and imperfect physicality within which we are now bound ? What will be the conditions and operations of its life still physical in its base upon the earth by which it can be known as divine ?

If it is to be the product of an evolution, and it is so that we must envisage it, an evolution out of our human imperfection and ignorance into a greater truth of spirit and nature, by what process or stages can it grow into manifestation or rapidly arrive? The process of the evolution upon earth has been slow and tardy—what principle must intervene if there is to be a transformation, a progressive or sudden change?

* *

Another difficulty that the transformation of the body has to face is its dependence for its very existence upon food and here too are involved the gross physical instincts, impulses, desires that are associated with this difficult factor, the essential cravings of the palate, the greed of food and animal gluttony of the belly, the coarsening of the mind when it grovels in the mud of sense, obeys a servitude to its mere animal part and hugs its bondage to Matter. The higher human in us seeks refuge in a temperate moderation, in abstemiousness and abstinence or in carelessness about the body and its wants and in an absorption in higher things.

The spiritual seeker often, like the Jain ascetics, seeks refuge in long and frequent fasts which lift him temporarily at least out of the clutch of the body's demands and help him to feel in himself a pure vacancy of the wide rooms of the spirit. But all this is not liberation and the question may be raised whether, not only at first but always, the divine life also must submit to this necessity. But it could only deliver itself from it altogether if it could find out the way so to draw upon the universal energy that the energy would sustain not only the vital parts of our physicality but its constituent matter with no need of aid for sustenance from any outside substance of Matter. It is indeed possible even while fasting for very long periods to maintain the full energies and activities of the soul and mind and life, even those of the body, to remain wakeful but concentrated in Yoga all the time, or to think deeply and write day and night, to dispense with sleep, to walk eight hours a day, maintaining all these activities separately or together and not feel any loss of strength, any fatigue, any kind of failure or decadence. At the end of the fast one can even resume at once taking the normal or even a greater than the normal amount of nourishment without any transition or precaution such as medical science enjoins, as if both the complete fasting and the feasting were natural conditions, alternating by an immediate and easy passage from one to the other, of a body already trained by a sort of initial transformation to be an instrument of the powers and activities of Yoga. But one thing one does not escape and that is the wasting of the material tissues of the body, its flesh and substance. Conceivably, if a practicable way and means could only be found, this last invincible obstacle too might be overcome and the body maintained by an interchange of its forces with the

forces of material Nature, giving to her her need from the individual and taking from her directly the sustaining energies of her universal existence. Conceivably, one might rediscover and re-establish at the summit of the evolution of life the phenomenon we see at its base, the power to draw from all around it the means of sustenance and self-renewal. Or else the evolved being might acquire the greater power to draw down those means from above rather than draw them up or pull them in from the environment around, all about it and below it. But until something like this is achieved or made possible we have to go back to food and the established material forces of Nature.

In fact we do, however unconsciously, draw constantly upon the universal energy, the force in Matter to replenish our material existence and the mental, vital and other potencies in the body: we do it directly in the invisible processes of interchange constantly kept up by Nature and by special means devised by her; breathing is one of these, sleep also and repose. But as her basic means for maintaining and renewing the gross physical body and its workings and inner potencies Nature has selected the taking in of outside matter in the shape of food, its digestion, assimilation of what is assimilable and elimination of what cannot or ought not to be assimilated, this by itself is sufficient for mere maintenance, but for assuring health and strength in the body so maintained it has added the impulse towards physical exercise and play of many kinds, ways for the expenditure and renewal of energy, the choice or the necessity of manifold action and labour. In the new life, in its beginnings at least, it would not be necessary or advisable to make any call for an extreme or precipitate rejection of the need of food or the established natural method for the maintenance of the still imperfectly

transformed body. If or when these things have to be transcended it must come as a result of the awakened will of the spirit, a will also in Matter itself, an imperative evolutionary urge, an act of the creative transmutations of Time or a descent from the Transcendence. Meanwhile the drawing in of the universal energy by a conscious action of the higher powers of the being from around or from above, by a call to what is still to us a transcending consciousness or by an invasion or descent from the Transcendence itself may well become an occasional, a frequent or a constant phenomenon and even reduce the part played by food and its need to an incidence no longer preoccupying, a necessity minor and less and less imperative. Meanwhile food and the ordinary process of Nature can be accepted although its use has to be liberated from attachment and desire and the grosser undiscriminating appetites and clutch at the pleasures of the flesh which is the way of the Ignorance; the physical processes have to be subtilised and the grossest may have to be eliminated and new processes found or new instrumentalities emerge. So long as it is accepted a refined pleasure in it may be permitted and even a desireless *Ananda* of taste take the place of the physical relish and the human selection by likings and dislikings which is our present imperfect response to what is offered to us by Nature. It must be remembered that for the divine life on earth, earth and Matter have not to be and cannot be rejected but have only to be sublimated and to reveal in themselves the possibilities of the Spirit, serve the Spirit's highest uses and be transformed into instruments of a greater living.

## 3. The Real Problem of Food—Attachment and Greed

It is the attachment to food, the greed and eagerness for it, making it an unduly important thing in the life, that is contrary to the spirit of Yoga. To be aware that something is pleasant to the palate is not wrong; only one must have no desire nor hankering for it, no exultation in getting it, no displeasure or regret at not getting it. One must be calm and equal, not getting upset or dissatisfied when the food is not tasty or not in abundance—eating the fixed amount that is necessary, not less or more. There should be neither eagerness nor repugnance.

To be always thinking about food and troubling the mind is quite the wrong way of getting rid of the food-desire. Put the food element in the right place in the life, in a small corner, and don't concentrate on it but on other things.

* *

It is no part of this Yoga to suppress taste, *rasa*, altogether. What is to be got rid of is vital desire and attachment, the greed of food, being overjoyed at getting the food you like, sorry and discontented when you do not have it, giving an undue importance to it. Equality[1] is here the test as in so many other matters.

* *

[1] Sri Aurobindo says : "Equality means a quiet and unmoved mind and vital, it means not to be touched or disturbed by things that happen or things said or done to you...to have an equal view of men and their nature and acts and the forces that move them; it helps one to see the Truth about them..."

Neither neglect this turn of the nature (food-desire) nor make too much of it; it has to be dealt with, purified and mastered but without giving it too much importance. There are two ways of conquering it—one of detachment, learning to regard food as only a physical necessity and the vital satisfaction of the stomach and the palate as a thing of no importance; the other is to be able to take without insistence or seeking any food given and to find in it (whether pronounced good or bad by others) the equal *rasa*, not of the food for its own sake, but of the universal *Ananda*.

* *

It is a mistake to neglect the body and let it waste away; the body is the means of the *sādhanā* and should be maintained in good order. There should be no attachment to it, but no contempt or neglect either of the material part of our nature.

In this Yoga the aim is not only the union with the higher consciousness but the transformation (by its power) of the lower including the physical nature.

It is not necessary to have desire or greed of food in order to eat. The yogi eats not out of desire, but to maintain the body.

Too much eating makes the body material and heavy, eating too little makes it weak and nervous—one has to find the true harmony and balance between the body's need and the food taken.

## 4. The Yogic Attitude

If you want to do Yoga, you must take more and more in all matters, small or great, the yogic attitude. In our path that attitude is not one of forceful suppression, but of

detachment and equality with regard to the objects of desire. Forceful suppression (fasting comes under the head) stands on the same level as free indulgence; in both cases, the desire remains: in the one it is fed by indulgence, in the other it lies latent and exasperated by suppression. It is only when one stands back, separates oneself from the lower vital, refusing to regard its desires and clamours as one's own, and cultivates an entire equality and equanimity in the consciousness with respect to them that the lower vital itself becomes gradually purified and itself also calm and equal. Each wave of desire as it comes must be observed, as quietly and with as much unmoved detachment as you would observe something going on outside you, and must be allowed to pass, rejected from the consciousness, and the true movement, the true consciousness steadily put in its place.

* *

All the ordinary vital movements are foreign to the true being and come from outside; they do not belong to the soul nor do they originate in it but are waves from the general Nature, *prakṛti*.

The desires come from outside, enter the subconscious vital and rise to the surface. It is only when they rise to the surface and the mind becomes aware of them, that we become conscious of the desire. It seems to us to be our own because we feel it thus rising from the vital into the mind and do not know that it came from outside. What belongs to the vital, to the being, what makes it responsible is not the desire itself, but the habit of responding to the waves or the currents of suggestion that come into it from the universal *prakṛti*.

The rejection of desire is essentially the rejection of the element of craving, putting that out from the consciousness itself as a foreign element not belonging to the true self and the inner nature. But refusal to indulge the suggestions of desire is also a part of the rejection; to abstain from the action suggested, if it is not the right action, must be included in the yogic discipline. It is only when this is done in the wrong way, by a mental ascetic principle or a hard moral rule, that it can be called suppression. The difference between suppression and an inward essential rejection is the difference between mental or moral control and a spiritual purification.

When one lives in the true consciousness one feels the desires outside oneself, entering from outside, from the universal lower *prakṛti*, into the mind and the vital parts. In the ordinary human condition this is not felt; men become aware of the desire only when it is there, when it has come inside and found a lodging or a habitual harbourage and so they think it is their own and a part of themselves. The first condition for getting rid of desire is, therefore, to become conscious with the true consciousness; for then it becomes much easier to dismiss it than when one has to struggle with it as if it were a constituent part of oneself to be thrown out from the being. It is easier to cast off an accretion than to excise what is felt as a parcel of our substance.

When the psychic being is in front, then also to get rid of desire becomes easy; for the psychic being has in itself no desires, it has only aspirations and a seeking and love for the Divine and all things that are or tend towards the Divine. The constant prominence of the psychic being tends of itself to bring out the true consciousness and set right almost automatically the movements of the nature.

## 5. The Three Modes of Nature and Threefold Classification of Foods

The idea of the three essential modes of Nature is a creation of the ancient Indian thinkers and its truth is not at once obvious because it was the result of long psychological experiment and profound internal experience. Therefore without a long inner experience, without intimate self-observation and intuitive perception of the Nature-forces it is difficult to grasp accurately or firmly utilise.

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These modes are termed in the Indian books qualities, *guṇas*, and are given the names *sattwa*, *rajas*, *tamas*. *Sattwa* is the force of equilibrium and translates in quality as good and harmony and happiness and light; *Rajas* is the force or *kinesis* and translates in quality as struggle and effort, passion and action; *Tamas* is the force of inconscience and inertia and translates in quality as obscurity and incapacity and inaction. Ordinarily used for psychological self-analysis, these distinctions are valid also in physical Nature.

* *

Our food, for example, the *Gita* tells us, is either sattwic, rajasic or tamasic according to its character and effect on the body. The sattwic temperament in the mental and physical body turns naturally to the things that increase the life increase the inner and outer strength, nourish at once the mental, vital and physical force and increase the pleasure and satisfaction and happy condition of mind and life and body,

all that is succulent and soft and firm and satisfying. The rajasic temperament prefers naturally food that is violently sour, pungent, hot, acrid, rough and strong and burning, the aliments that increase ill-health and the distempers of the mind and body. The tamasic temperament takes a perverse pleasure in cold, impure, stale, rotten or tasteless food or even accepts like the animals the remnants half-eaten by others.

* * *

Every form of things, whether animate or inanimate, is a constantly maintained poise of natural forces in motion and is subject to an unending stream of helpful, disturbing or disintegrating contacts from other combinations of forces that surround it. Our own nature of mind, life and body is nothing else than such a formative combination and poise.

## 6. Sattwic Food—Truly Spiritual Quality in Food—Practice of Equality

I think the importance of sattwic food from the spiritual point of view has been exaggerated. Food is rather a question of hygiene, and many of the sanctions and prohibitions laid down in ancient religions had more a hygienic than a spiritual motive. The *Gita's* definitions seem to point in the same direction—tamasic food, it seems to say, is what is stale or rotten with the virtue gone out of it, rajasic food is that which is too acrid, pungent, etc., heats the blood and spoils the health, sattwic food is what is pleasing, healthy, etc. It may well be that different kinds of food nourish the action of the different *guṇas* and so indirectly are helpful or harmful apart

from their physical action. But that is as far as one can go confidently. What particular eatables are or are not sattwic is another question and more difficult to determine. Spiritually, I should say that the effect of food depends more on the occult atmosphere and influences that come with it than on anything in the food itself. Vegetarianism is another question altogether; it stands, as you say, on a will not to do harm to the more conscious forms of life for the satisfaction of the belly.

As for the question of practising to take all kinds of food with equal *rasa*, it is not necessary to practise nor does it really come by practice. One has to acquire equality within in the consciousness and as this equality grows, one can extend it or apply it to the various fields of the activity of the consciousness.

* *

The inner spiritual progress does not depend on outer conditions so much as on the way we react to them from within—that has always been the ultimate verdict of spiritual experience. It is why we insist on taking the right attitude and persisting in it, on an inner state not dependent on outer circumstances, a state of equality and calm, if it cannot be at once of inner happiness, on going more and more within and looking from within outwards instead of living in the surface mind which is always at the mercy of the shocks and blows of life. It is only from that inner state that one can be stronger than life and its disturbing forces and hope to conquer.

To remain quiet within, firm in the will to go through, refusing to be disturbed or discouraged by difficulties or

fluctuations, that is one of the first things to be learned in the Path. To do otherwise is to encourage the instability of consciousness, the difficulty of keeping experience of which you complain. It is only if you keep quiet and steady within that the lines of experience can go on with some steadiness —though they are never without periods of interruption and fluctuation; but these, if properly treated, can then become periods of assimilation and exhaustion of difficulty rather than denials of *sādhanā*.

A spiritual atmosphere is more important that outer conditions; if one can get that and also create one's own spiritual air to breathe in and live in it, that is the true condition of progress.

## 7. Food and Sex

*Q: Does sexual desire increase by taking more food and decrease by taking less?*

A: It is rather certain kinds of food that are supposed to increase it—e.g., meat, onions, chillies, etc.

*Q: Is taking very little food helpful in controlling the senses?*

A: No. it simply exasperates them—to take a moderate amount is best. People who fast, easily get exalted and may lose their balance.

* * *

*Q: If one takes only vegetarian food, does it help in controlling the senses?*

A: It avoids some of the difficulties which the meat-eaters have, but it is not sufficient by itself.

## 8. Physical and Other Resources of Energy, Fasting, etc.

The transformation to which we aspire is too vast and complex to come at one stroke; it must be allowed to come by stages. The physical change is the last of these stages and is itself a progressive process.

The inner transformation cannot be brought about by physical means either of a positive or a negative nature. On the contrary, the physical change itself can only be brought about by a descent of the greater supramental consciousness into the cells of the body. Till then at least the body and its supporting energies have to be maintained in part by the ordinary means, food, sleep, etc. Food has to be taken in the right spirit, with the right consciousness; sleep has to be gradually transformed into the Yogic repose. A premature and excessive physical austerity, *tapasyā*, may endanger the process of the *sādhanā* by establishing a disturbance and abnormality of the forces in the different parts of the system. A great energy may pour into the mental and vital parts, but the nerves and the body may be overstrained and lose the strength to support the play of these higher energies. This is the reason why an extreme physical austerity is not included here as a substantive part of the *sādhanā*.

There is no harm in fasting from time to time for a day or two or in reducing the food taken to a small but sufficient modicum; but entire abstinence for a long period is not advisable.

* *

The idea of giving up food is a wrong inspiration. You can go on with a small quantity of food, but not without

food altogether, except for a comparatively short time. Remember what the *Gita* says, "Yoga is not for one who eats in excess nor for one who abstains from eating altogether." Vital energy is one thing—of that one can draw a great amount without food and often it increases with fasting; but physical substance, without which life loses its support, is of a different order.

* *

It is a fact that by fasting, if the mind and the nerves are solid or the will-force dynamic, one can get for a time into a state of inner energy and receptivity which is alluring to the mind and the usual reactions of hunger, weakness, intestinal disturbance, etc., can be wholly avoided. But the body suffers by diminution and there can easily develop in the vital a morbid overstrained condition due to the inrush of more vital energy than the nervous system can assimilate or co-ordinate. Nervous people should avoid the temptation to fast; it is often accompanied or followed by delusions and a loss of balance. Especially if there is a motive of hunger-strike or that element comes in, fasting becomes perilous, for it is then an indulgence of a vital movement which may easily become a habit injurious and pernicious to the *sādhanā*. Even if all these reactions are avoided, still there is no sufficient utility in fasting, since the higher energy and receptivity ought to come not by artificial or physical means but by intensity of the consciousness and strong will for the *sādhanā*.

## 9. Changing the Hunger Principle

I suppose you have become aware of the principle of hunger in the vital-physical. It is not really either by satisfying it or forcibly denying it that it will go—it is by putting a will on it to change and bringing down a higher consciousness that it can change.

## 10. Food and Sleep

Do not trouble your mind about food. Take it in the right quantity (neither too much nor too little), without greed or repulsion, as the means given you by the Mother for the maintenance of the body, in the right spirit, offering it to the Divine in you; then it need not create *tamas*.

* *

The sleep you describe in which there is a luminous silence or else the sleep in which there is *Ananda* in the cells, these are obviously the best states. The other hours, those of which you are unconscious, may be spells of a deep slumber in which you have got out of the physical into the mental, vital or other planes. You say you were unconscious, but it may simply be that you do not remember what happened; for in coming back there is a sort of turning over of the consciousness, a transition or reversal, in which everything experienced in sleep except perhaps the last happening of all or else one that was very impressive, recedes from the physical consciousness and all becomes as if a blank. There is another blank state, a state of inertia, not only blank, but

heavy and unremembering; but that is when one goes deeply and crassly into the subconscient; this subterranean plunge is very undesirable, obscuring, lowering, often fatiguing rather than restful, the reverse of the luminous silence.

* *

Sleep cannot be replaced, but it can be changed; for you can become conscious in sleep. If you are thus conscious, then the night can be utilised for a higher working—provided the body gets its due rest; for the object of sleep is the body's rest and the renewal of the vital-physical force. It is a mistake to deny to the body food and sleep, as some from an ascetic idea or impulse want to do—that only wears out the physical support and although either the yogic or the vital energy can long keep at work an overstrained or declining physical system, a time comes when this drawing is no longer so easy nor perhaps possible. The body should be given what it needs for its own efficient working. Moderate but sufficient food (without greed or desire), sufficient sleep, but not of the heavy tamasic kind—this should be the rule.

## 11. Food as Offering

No matter what the gift and to whom it is presented by us, there must be a consciousness in the act that we are presenting it to the one divine Being in all beings. Our commonest or most grossly material actions must assume this sublimated character; when we eat, we should be conscious that we are giving our food to that Presence in us; it must be a sacred offering in a temple and the sense of a mere physical need or self-gratification must pass away from us.

## 12. The Ascent of Life

The first terms of Life are divison, a force-driven subconscient will, apparent not as will but as dumb urge of physical energy, and the impotence of an inert subjection to the mechanical energies that govern the interchange between the form and its environment. This inconscience and this blind but potent action of Energy are the type of the material universe as the physical scientist sees it and this his view of things extends and turns into the whole of basic existence; it is the consciousness of Matter and the accomplished type of material living. But there comes a new equipoise, there intervenes a new set of terms which increase in proportion as Life delivers itself out of this form and begins to evolve towards conscious Mind; for the middle terms of Life are death and mutual devouring, hunger and conscious desire, the sense of a limited room and capacity and the struggle to increase, to expand, to conquer and to possess. These three terms are the basis of that status of evolution which the Darwinian theory first made plain to human knowledge. For the phenomenon of death involves in itself a struggle to survive, since death is only the negative term in which Life hides from itself and tempts its own positive being to seek for immortality; the phenomenon of hunger and desire involves a struggle towards a status of satisfaction and security, since desire is only the stimulus by which Life tempts its own positive being to rise out of the negation of unfulfilled hunger towards the full possession of the delight of existence; the phenomenon of limited capacity involves a struggle towards expansion, mastery and possession, the possession of the self and the conquest of the environment, since limitation and defect are only the negation by which Life tempts

its own positive being to seek for the perfection of which it is eternally capable. The struggle for life is not only a struggle to survive, it is also a struggle for possession and perfection, since only by taking hold of the environment whether more or less, whether by self-adaptation to it or by adapting it to oneself either by accepting and conciliating it or by conquering and changing it, can survival be secured, and equally is it true that only a greater and greater perfection can assure a continuous permanence, a lasting survival. It is this truth that Darwinism sought to express in the formula of the survival of the fittest.

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Association with love as its secret principle and its emergent summit is the type, the power of this new relation and therefore the governing principle of the development into the third status of life.

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.....This third status is a condition in which we rise progressively beyond the struggle for life by mutual devouring and the survival of the fittest by that struggle; for there is more and more a survival by mutual help and a self-perfectioning by mutual adaptation, interchange and fusion. Life is a self-affirmation of being, even a development and survival of ego, but of a being that has need of other beings, an ego that seeks to meet and include other egos and to be included in their life. The individuals and the aggregates who develop most the law of association and the law of love, of common help, kindliness, affection, comradeship, unity, who harmonise

most successfully survival and mutual self-giving, the aggregate increasing the individual and the individual the aggregate, as well as individual increasing individual and aggregate aggregate by mutual interchange, will be the fittest for survival in this tertiary status of the evolution.

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The growth into the third status of life by the principle of association, the growth of love, does not abolish the law of desire, but rather transforms and fulfils it. Love is in its nature the desire to give oneself to others and to receive others in exchange, it is a commerce between being and being. Physical life does not desire to give itself, it desires only to receive. It is true that it is compelled to give itself, for the life which only receives and does not give must become barren, wither and perish, if indeed such life in its entirety is possible at all here or in any world; but it is compelled, not willing, it obeys the subconscious impulse of Nature rather than consciously shares in it. Even when love intervenes, the self-giving at first still preserves to a large extent the mechanical character of the subconscious will in the atom. Love itself at first obeys the law of hunger and enjoys the receiving and the exacting from others rather than the giving and surrendering to others which it admits chiefly as a necessary price for the thing that it desires. But here it has not yet attained to its true nature; its true law is to establish an equal commerce in which the joy of giving is equal to the joy of receiving and tends in the end to become even greater; but that is when it is shooting beyond itself under the pressure of the psychic flame to attain to the fulfilment of utter unity and has therefore to realise that which seemed to it not-self as an even greater

and dearer self than its own individuality. In its life-origin, the law of love is the impulse to realise and fulfil oneself in others and by others, to be enriched by enriching, to possess and be possessed because without being possessed one does not possess oneself utterly.

The inert incapacity of atomic existence to possess itself, the subjection of the material individual to the not-self belongs to the first status of life. The consciousness of limitation and the struggle to possess, to master both self and the not-self is the type of the secondary status. Here too the development to the third status brings a transformation of the original terms into a fulfilment and a harmony which repeat the terms while seeming to contradict them. There comes about through association and through love a recognition of the not-self as a greater self and therefore a consciously accepted submission to its law and need which fulfils the increasing impulse of aggregate life to absorb the individual; and there is a possession again by the individual of the life of others as his own and of all that it has to give him as his own which fulfils the opposite impulse of individual possession. Nor can this relation of mutuality between the individual and the world he lives in be expressed or complete or secure unless the same relation is established between individual and individual and between aggregate and aggregate. All the difficult effort of man towards the harmonisation of self-affirmation and freedom by which he possesses himself with association and love or fraternity, comradeship, in which he gives himself to others and harmonious equilibrium, justice and equality by which he creates a balance of the two opposites, is really an attempt inevitably predetermined in its lines to solve the original problem of Nature, the very problem of Life itself by the resolution of the conflict between the two opposites which present themselves

in the very foundations of Life in Matter. The resolution is attempted by the higher principle of Mind which alone can find the road towards the harmony intended, even though the harmony itself can only be found in a Power still beyond us.

For, if the data with which we have started are correct, the end of the road, the goal itself can only be reached by Mind passing beyond itself into that which is beyond Mind, since of That the Mind is only an inferior term and an instrument first for descent into form and individuality and secondly for reascension into that reality which the form embodies and the individuality represents. Therefore the perfect solution of the problem of Life is not likely to be realised by association, interchange and accommodations of love alone or through the law of the mind and the heart alone. It must come by a fourth status of life in which the eternal unity of the many is realised through the spirit and the conscious foundation of all the operations of life is laid no longer in the divisions of body, nor in the passions and hungers of the vitality, nor in the groupings and the imperfect harmonies of the mind, nor in a combination of all these, but in the unity and freedom of the Spirit.

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# III

# Other Allied Principles

## 1. The Human Mind

In human mind there is the first appearance of an observing intelligence that regards what is being done and of a will and choice that have become conscious; but the consciousness is still limited and superficial: the knowledge also is limited and imperfect, it is a partial intelligence, a half understanding, groping and empirical in great part or, if rational, then rational by constructions, theories, formulas. There is not as yet a luminous seeing which knows things by a direct grasp and arranges them with a spontaneous precision according to the seeing, according to the scheme of their inherent truth; although there is a certain element of instinct and intuition and insight which has some beginning of this power, the normal character of human intelligence is an inquiring reason or reflective thought which observes, supposes, infers, concludes, arrives by labour at a constructed truth, a constructed scheme of knowledge, a deliberately arranged action of its own making.

## 2. Mental Constructions and the Freedom of the Spirit

In the lower existence the order is automatic, the binding of Nature complete, her groove firm and imperative: the cosmic Consciousness-Force evolves a pattern of Nature and its habitual mould or fixed round of action and obliges the infrarational being to live and act according to the pattern and in the mould or round made for it. Mind in man starts with this prearranged pattern and routine, but, as it evolves,

it enlarges the design and expands the mould and tries to replace this fixed unconscious or half-conscious law of automatism by an order based on ideas and significances and accepted life-motives, or it attempts an intelligent standardisation and a framework determined by rational purpose, utility and convenience. There is nothing really binding or permanent in man's knowledge-structures or his life-structures; but still he cannot but create standards of thought, knowledge, personality, life, conduct and, more or less consciously and completely, base his existence on them or, at least, try his best to frame his life in the ideative cadre of his chosen or accepted *dharmas*. In the passage to the spiritual life the supreme ideal held up is, on the contrary, not law, but liberty in the Spirit; the Spirit breaks through all formulas to find its self and, if it has still to be concerned with expression, it must arrive at the liberty of a free and true instead of an artificial expression, a true and spontaneous spiritual order. "Abandon all dharmas, all standards and rules of being and action, and take refuge in Me alone", is the summit rule of the highest existence held up by the Divine Being to the seeker. In the seeking for this freedom, in the liberation from constructed law into law of self and spirit, in the casting away of the mental control in order to substitute for it the control of the spiritual Reality, an abandonment of the lower constructed truth of mind for the higher essential Truth of being, it is possible to pass through a stage in which there is an inner freedom but a lack of outer order,—an action in the flux of nature childlike or inert like a leaf lying passive or driven by the wind or even incoherent or extravagant in outer semblance. It is possible also to arrive at a temporary ordered spiritual expression of the self which is sufficient for the stage one can reach for a time

or in this life; or it may be a personal order of self-expression valid according to the norm of what one has already realised of the spiritual truth but afterwards changing freely by the force of spirituality to express the yet larger truth that one goes on to realise. But the supramental gnostic being stands in a consciousness in which knowledge is self-existent and manifests itself according to the order self-determined by the Will of the Infinite in the supernature. This self-determination according to a self-existent knowledge replaces the automatism of Nature and the standards of Mind by the spontaneity of a Truth self-aware and self-active in the very grain of the existence.

* *

This is the whole sense and the inherent law and necessity of the passage from the purely mental and material being and life to the spiritual and supramental being and life, that the liberation, perfection, self-fulfilment for which the being in the Ignorance is seeking can only be reached by a passing out of his present nature of ignorance into a nature of spiritual self-knowledge and world-knowledge. This greater nature we speak of as Supernature because it is beyond his actual level of consciousness and capacity; but in fact it is his own true nature, the height and completeness of it, to which he must arrive if he is to find his real self and whole possibility of being. Whatever happens in Nature must be the result of Nature, the effectuation of what is implied or inherent in it, its inevitable fruit and consequence. If our nature is a fundamental inconscience and ignorance arriving with difficulty at an imperfect knowledge, an imperfect formulation of consciousness and being, the results in our being,

life and action and creation must be, as they now are, a constant imperfection and insecure half result, an imperfect mentality, an imperfect life, an imperfect physical existence. We seek to construct systems of knowledge and systems of life by which we can arrive at some perfection of our existence, some order of right relations, right use of mind, right use and happiness and beauty of life, right use of the body. But what we achieve is a constructed half-rightness mixed with much that is wrong and unlovely and unhappy; our successive constructions, because of the vice in them and because mind and life cannot rest permanently anywhere in their seeking, are exposed to destruction, decadence, disruption of their order, and we pass from them to others which are not more finally successful or enduring, even if on one side or another they may be richer and fuller or more rationally plausible. It cannot be otherwise, because we can construct nothing which goes beyond our nature; imperfect, we cannot construct perfection, however wonderful may seem to us the machinery our mental ingenuity invents, however externally effective. Ignorant, we cannot construct a system of entirely true and fruitful self-knowledge or world-knowledge: our science itself is a construction, a mass, of formulas and devices; masterful in knowledge of processes and in the creation of apt machinery, but ignorant of the foundations of our being and of world-being, it cannot perfect our nature and therefore cannot perfect our life.

### 3. The Principle of Desire

Desire, it is thought, is the real motive power of human living and to cast it out would be to stop the springs of life;

satisfaction of desire is man's only enjoyment and to eliminate it would be to extinguish the impulse of life by a quietistic asceticism. But the real motive power of the life of the soul is Will; desire is only a deformation of will in the dominant bodily life and physical mind. The essential turn of the soul to possession and enjoyment of the world consists in a will to delight, and the enjoyment of the satisfaction of craving is only a vital and physical degradation of the will to delight. It is essential that we should distinguish between pure will and desire, between the inner will to delight and the outer lust and craving of the mind and body. If we are unable to make this distinction practically in the experience of our being, we can only make a choice between a life-killing asceticism and the gross will to live or else try to effect an awkward, uncertain and precarious compromise between them. This is in fact what the mass of men do; a small minority trample down the life instinct and strain after an ascetic perfection; most obey the gross will to live with such modifications and restraints as society imposes or the normal social man has been trained to impose on his own mind and actions; others set up a balance between ethical austerity and temperate indulgence of the desiring mental and vital self and see in this balance the golden mean of a sane mind and healthy human living. But none of these ways gives the perfection which we are seeking, the divine government of the will in life. To tread down altogether the *prāṇa*, the vital being, is to kill the force of life by which the large action of the embodied soul in the human being must be supported; to indulge the gross will to live is to remain satisfied with imperfection; to compromise between them is to stop half way and possess neither earth nor heaven. But if we can get at the pure will undeformed by desire,—which we shall find to be a much

more free, tranquil, steady and effective force than the leaping smoke-stifled, soon fatigued and baffled flame of desire,—and at the calm inner will of delight not afflicted or limited by any trouble of craving, we can then transform the *prāṇa* from a tyrant, enemy, assailant of the mind into an obedient instrument. We may call these greater things, too, by the name of desire, if we choose, but then we must suppose that there is a divine desire other than the vital craving, a God-desire of which this other and lower phenomenon is an obscure shadow and into which it has to be transfigured.

## 4. The Method of Anubhava or Purposive Indulgence

The system of getting rid of things by *anubhava* can also be a dangerous one; for on this way one can easily become more entangled instead of arriving at freedom. This method has behind it two well-known psychological motives. One, the motive of purposeful exhaustion, is valid only in some cases, especially when some natural tendency has too strong a hold or too strong a drive in it to be got rid of by *vicāra* or by the process of rejection and the substitution of the true movement in its place; when that happens in excess, the *sādhak* has sometimes even to go back to the ordinary action of the ordinary life, get the true experience of it with a new mind and will behind and then return to the spiritual life with the obstacle eliminated or else ready for elimination. But this method of purposive indulgence is always dangerous, though sometimes inevitable. It succeeds only when there is a very strong will in the being towards realisation; for then indulgence brings a strong dissatisfaction and reaction, *vairāgya*, and the will

towards perfection can be carried down into the recalcitrant part of the nature.

The other motive for *anubhava* is of a more general applicability; for in order to reject anything from the being one has first to become conscious of it, to have the clear inner experience of its action and to discover its actual place in the workings of the nature. One can then work upon it to eliminate it, if it is an entirely wrong movement, or to transform it if it is only the degradation of a higher and true movement. It is this or something like it that is attempted crudely and improperly with a rudimentary and insufficient knowledge in the system of psycho-analysis. The process of raising up the lower movements into the full light of consciousness in order to know and deal with them is inevitable; for there can be no complete change without it. But it can truly succeed only when a higher light and force are sufficiently at work to overcome, sooner or later, the force of the tendency that is held up for change. Many, under the pretext of *anubhava*, not only raise up the adverse movement, but support it with their consent instead of rejecting it, find justifications for continuing or repeating it and so go on playing with it, indulging its return, eternising it; afterwards when they want to get rid of it, it has got such a hold that they find themselves helpless in its clutch and only a terrible struggle or an intervention of Divine Grace can liberate them. Some do this out of a vital twist or perversity, others out of sheer ignorance; but in Yoga, as in life, ignorance is not accepted by Nature as a justifying excuse. This danger is there in all improper dealings with the ignorant parts of the nature; but none is more ignorant, more perilous, more unreasoning and obstinate in recurrence than the lower vital subconscious and its movements. To raise it up prematurely or improperly for

*anubhava* is to risk suffusing the conscious parts also with its dark and dirty stuff and thus poisoning the whole vital and even the mental nature. Always therefore one should begin by a positive, not a negative experience, by bringing down something of the divine nature, calm, light, equanimity, purity, divine strength into the parts of the conscious being that have to be changed; only when that has been sufficiently done and there is a firm positive basis, is it safe to raise up the concealed subconscious adverse elements in order to destroy and eliminate them by the strength of the Divine Calm, Light, Force and Knowledge. Even so, there will be enough of the lower stuff rising up of itself to give you as much of the *anubhava* as you will need for getting rid of the obstacles; but then they can be dealt with with much less danger and under a higher internal guidance.

## 5. Asceticism

This hampering, this obstacle of the mind, life and body—the heavy inertia and persistence of the body, the turbid passions of the life-part, the obscurity and doubting incertitudes, denials, other-formulations of the mind,—is an impediment so great and intolerable that the spiritual urge becomes impatient and tries rigorously to quell these opponents, to reject the life, to mortify the body, to silence the mind and achieve its own separate salvation, spirit departing into pure spirit and rejecting from it altogether an undivine and obscure Nature. Apart from the supreme call, the natural push of the spiritual part in us to return to its own highest element and status, this aspect of vital and physical Nature as an impediment to pure spirituality is a compelling reason for asceticism,

for illusionism, for the tendency to other-worldliness, the urge towards withdrawal from life, the passion for a pure and unmixed Absolute. A pure spiritual absolutism is a movement of the self towards its own supreme selfhood, but it is also indispensable for Nature's own purpose; for without it the mixture, the downward gravitation would make the spiritual emergence impossible. The extremist of this absolutism, the solitary, the ascetic, is the standard-bearer of the spirit, his ochre robe is its flag, the sign of a refusal of all compromise, —as indeed the struggle of emergence cannot end by a compromise, but only by an entire spiritual victory and the complete surrender of the lower nature. If that is impossible here, then indeed it must be achieved elsewhere; if Nature refuses submission to the emerging spirit, then the soul must withdraw from her. There is thus a dual tendency in the spiritual emergence, on one side a drive towards the establishment at all cost of the spiritual consciousness in the being, even to the rejection of Nature, on the other side a push towards the extension of spirituality to our parts of nature. But until the first is fully achieved, the second can only be imperfect and halting. It is the foundation of the pure spiritual consciousness that is the first object in the evolution of the spiritual man, and it is this and the urge of that consciousness towards contact with the Reality, the Self or the Divine Being that must be the first and foremost or even, till it is perfectly accomplished, the sole preoccupation of the spiritual seeker. It is the one thing needful that has to be done by each on whatever line is possible to him, by each according to the spiritual capacity developed in his nature.

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It is almost universally supposed that spiritual life must necessarily be a life of ascetic spareness, a pushing away of all that is not absolutely needed for the bare maintenance of the body; and this is valid for a spiritual life which is in its nature and intention a life of withdrawal from life. Even apart from that ideal, it might be thought that the spiritual turn must always make for an extreme simplicity, because all else would be a life of vital desire and physical self-indulgence. But from a wider standpoint this is a mental standard based on the law of the Ignorance of which desire is the motive; to overcome the Ignorance, to delete the ego, a total rejection not only of desire but of all the things that can satisfy desire may intervene as a valid principle. But this standard or any mental standard cannot be absolute nor can it be binding as a law on the consciousness that has arisen above desire; a complete purity and self-mastery would be in the very grain of its nature and that would remain the same in poverty or in riches : for if it could be shaken or sullied by either, it would not be real or would not be complete. The one rule of the gnostic life would be the self-expression of the Spirit, the will of the Divine Being; that will, that self-expression could manifest through extreme simplicity or through extreme complexity and opulence or in their natural balance,—for beauty and plenitude, a hidden sweetness and laughter in things, a sunshine and gladness of life are also powers and expressions of the Spirit. In all directions the Spirit within determining the law of the nature would determine the frame of the life and its detail and circumstance. In all there would be the same plastic principle; a rigid standardisation, however necessary for the mind's arrangement of things, could not be the law of the spiritual life. A great diversity and liberty of self-expression based on an underlying unity might well become

manifest; but everywhere there would be harmony and truth of order.

## 6. Sexual Abstinence or Brahmacharya

All movements are in the mass movements of Nature's cosmic forces, they are movements of universal Nature. The individual receives something of them, a wave or pressure of some cosmic force, and is driven by it; he thinks it is his own, generated in himself separately, but it is not so, it is part of a general movement which works just in the same way in others. Sex, for instance, is a movement of general Nature seeking for its play and it uses this or that one—a man vitally or physically "in love" as it is called, with a woman is simply repeating and satisfying the world-movement of sex;...

* *

The sex-energy itself is a great power with two components in its physical basis, one meant for procreation and the process necessary for it, the other for feeding the general energies of the body, mind and vital—also the spiritual energies of the body. The old yogis call these two components *retas* and *ojas*. The European scientists generally pooh-poohed the idea, but now they are beginning to discover the same fact for themselves.

* *

The sex-energy utilised by Nature for the purpose of reproduction is in its real nature a fundamental energy of life. It can be used not for the heightening but for a certain intensification of the vital-emotional life; it can be controlled and diverted from the sex-purpose and used for aesthetic and artistic or other creation and productiveness or preserved for heightening of the intellectual or other energies. Entirely controlled it can be turned into a force of spiritual energy also. This was well-known in ancient India and was described as the conversion of *retas* into *ojas* by *brahmacharya*. Sex-energy misused turns to disorder and disintegration of the life-energy and its powers.

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The sex-impulse is certainly the greatest force in the vital plane; if it can be sublimated and turned upwards, *ojas* is created which is a great help to the attainment of higher consciousness. But mere restraint is not sufficient.

* *

This Yoga demands a full ascension of the whole lower or ordinary consciousness to join the spiritual above it and a full descent of the spiritual (eventually of the supramental) into the mind, life and body to transform it. The total ascent is impossible so long as sex-desire blocks the way; the descent is dangerous so long as sex-desire is powerful in the vital. For at any moment an unexcised or latent sex-desire may be the cause of a mixture which throws back the true descent and uses the energy acquired for other purposes or turns all the action of the consciousness towards wrong

experience, turbid and delusive. One must, therefore, clear this obstacle out of the way; otherwise there is either no safety or no free movement towards finality in the *sādhanā*.

The contrary opinion of which you speak may be due to the idea that sex is a natural part of the human vital-physical whole, a necessity like food and sleep, and that its total inhibition may lead to unbalancing and to serious disorders. It is a fact that sex suppressed in outward action but indulged in other ways may lead to disorders of the system and brain troubles. That is the root of the medical theory which discourages sexual abstinence. But I have observed that these things happen only when there is either secret indulgence of a perverse kind replacing the normal sexual activity or else an indulgence of it in a kind of subtle vital way by imagination or by an invisible vital interchange of an occult kind—I do not think harm ever occurs when there is a true spiritual effort at mastery and abstinence. It is now held by many medical men in Europe that sexual abstinence, *if it is genuine*, is beneficial; for the element in the *retas* which serves the sexual act is then changed into its other element which feeds the energies of the system, mental, vital[1] and physical—and that justifies the Indian idea of *brahmacharya*, the transformation of *retas* into *ojas* and the raising of its energies upward so that they change into a spiritual force.

As for the method of mastery, it cannot be done by physical abstinence alone—it proceeds by a process of combined detachment and rejection. The consciousness stands back

[1] Sri Aurobindo says, "The vital is the Life-nature made up of desires, sensations, feelings, passions, energies of action, will of desire, reactions of the desire-soul in man and of all that play of possessive and other related instincts : anger, fear, greed, lust, etc. that belong to that field of the nature."

from the sex-impulse, feels it as not its own, as something alien thrown on it by Nature-force to which it refuses assent or identification; each time a certain movement of rejection throws it more and more outward. The mind remains unaffected; after a time the vital being which is the chief support withdraws from it in the same way, finally the physical consciousness no longer supports it. This process continues until even the subconscient can no longer rouse it up in dream and no further movement comes from the outer Nature-force to rekindle this lower fire. This is the course when the sex-propensity sticks obstinately; but there are some who can eliminate it decisively by a swift radical dropping away from the nature. That, however, is more rare.

It has to be said that the total elimination of the sex-impulse is one of the most difficult things in *sādhanā* and one must be prepared for it to take time. But its total disappearance has been achieved and a practical liberation crossed only by occasional dream-movements from the subconscient is fairly common.

## 7. Non-violence as a Principle of Action

It is self-evident that in the actual life of man intellectual, social, political, moral we can make no real step forward without a struggle, a battle between what exists and lives and what seeks to exist and live and between all that stands behind either. It is impossible, at least as men and things are, to advance, to grow, to fulfil and still to observe really and utterly that principle of harmlessness which is yet placed before us as the highest and best law of conduct. We will use only soul-force and never destroy by war or any even

defensive employment of physical violence ? Good, though until soul-force is effective, the *Asuric* force in men and nations tramples down, breaks, slaughters, burns, pollutes, as we see it doing today, but then at its ease and unhindered, and you have perhaps caused as much destruction of life by your abstinence as others by resort to violence ; still you have set up an ideal which may some day and at any rate ought to lead up to better things. But even soul-force, when it is effective, destroys. Only those who have used it with eyes open, know how much more terrible and destructive it is than the sword and the cannon ; and only those who do not limit their view to the act and its immediate results, can see how tremendous are its after-effects, how much is eventually destroyed and with that much all the life that depended on it and fed upon it. Evil cannot perish without the destruction of much that lives by the evil, and it is no less destruction even if we personally are saved the pain of a sensational act of violence.

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We must remember that the *Gita* was composed at a time when war was even more than it is now a necessary part of human activity and the idea of its elimination from the scheme of life would have been an absolute chimera. The gospel of universal peace and goodwill among men—for without a universal and entire mutual goodwill there can be no real and abiding peace—has never succeeded for a moment in possessing itself of human life during the historic cycle of our progress, because morally, socially, spiritually the race was not prepared and the poise of Nature in its evolution would not admit of its being immediately prepared

for any such transcendence. Even now we have not actually progressed beyond the feasibility of a system of accommodation between conflicting interests which may minimise the recurrence of the worst forms of strife. And towards this consummation the method, the approach which humanity has been forced by its own nature to adopt, is a monstrous mutual massacre unparallelled in history; a universal war, full of bitterness and irreconcilable hatred, is the straight way and the triumphant means modern man has found for the establishment of universal peace! That consummation, too, founded not upon any fundamental change in human nature, but upon intellectual notions, economic convenience, vital and sentimental shrinkings from the loss of life, discomfort and horror of war, effected by nothing better than political adjustments, gives no very certain promise of firm foundation and long duration. A day may come, must surely come, we will say, when humanity will be ready spiritually, morally, socially for the reign of universal peace; meanwhile the aspect of battle and the nature and function of man as a fighter have to be accepted and accounted for by any practical philosophy and religion. The *Gita*, taking life as it is and not only as it may be in some distant future, puts the question how this aspect and function of life, which is really an aspect and function of human activity in general, can be harmonised with the spiritual existence.

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There is a truth in *ahimsā*, there is a truth in destruction also. I do not teach that you should go on killing everybody every day as a spiritual *dharma*. I say that destruction can be done when it is part of the divine work commanded by

the Divine. Non-violence is better than violence as a rule, and still sometimes violence may be the right thing. I consider *dharma* as relative; unity with the Divine and action from the Divine Will, the highest way. Buddha did not aim at action in the world but at cessation from the world-existence. For that he found the Eightfold Path a necessary preparatory discipline and so proclaimed it. It (ahimsa) had nothing to do with the Yoga, but with the path towards liberation found by Buddha. There are many paths and all need not be one and the same in their teaching.

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Destruction in itself is neither good nor evil. It is a fact of Nature, a necessity in the play of forces, as things are in this world. The Light destroys the Darkness and the Powers of Darkness, and that is not a movement of Ignorance!

It all depends on the character of the destruction and the forces that enter into it. All dread of fire or other violent forces should be overcome. For dread shows a weakness—the free spirit can stand fearless before even the biggest forces of Nature.

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No doubt, hatred and cursing are not the proper attitude. It is true also that to look upon all things and all people with a calm and clear vision, to be uninvolved and impartial in one's judgments is a quite proper yogic attitude. A condition of perfect *samatā* can be established in which one sees all as equal, friends and enemies included, and is not disturbed by what men do or by what happens. The question is whether

this is all that is demanded from us. If so, then the general attitude will be of a neutral indifference to everything. But the *Gita*, which strongly insists on a perfect and absolute *samatā*, goes on to say, "Fight, destroy the adversary, conquer." If there is no kind of general action wanted, no loyalty to Truth as against Falsehood except for one's personal sadhana, no will for the Truth to conquer, then the *samatā* of indifference will suffice. But here there is a work to be done, a Truth to be established against which immense forces are ranged, invisible forces which can use visible things and persons and actions for their instruments. If one is among the disciples, the seekers of this Truth, one has to take sides for the Truth, to stand against the forces that attack it and seek to stifle it. Arjuna wanted not to stand for either side, to refuse any action of hostility even against assailants; Sri Krishna, who insisted so much on *samatā*, strongly rebuked his attitude and insisted equally on his fighting the adversary. "Have *samatā*", he said, "and seeing clearly the Truth, fight." Therefore to take sides with the Truth and to refuse to concede anything to the Falsehood that attacks, to be unflinchingly loyal and against the hostiles and the attackers, is not inconsistent with equality. It is personal and egoistic feeling that has to be thrown away; hatred and vital ill-will have to be rejected. But loyalty and refusal to compromise with the assailants and the hostiles or to dally with their ideas and demands and say, "After all, we can compromise with what they ask from us," or to accept them as companions and our own people—these things have a great importance. If the attack were a physical menace to the work and the leaders and doers of the work, one would see this at once. But because the attack is of a subtler kind, can a passive attitude be right ? It is a spiritual battle inward and outward; by neutrality and compromise or even passivity

one may allow the enemy forces to pass and crush down the Truth and its children. If you look at it from this point, you will see that if the inner spiritual equality is right, the active loyalty and firm taking of sides is as right, and the two cannot be incompatible.

I have, of course, treated it as a general question apart from all particular cases or personal questions. It is a principle of action that has to be seen in its right light and proportions.

## 8. God, The Bountiful and Prodigal Creator, And God, The Devourer and Destroyer

Indian spirituality knows that God is Love and Peace and calm Eternity—the Gita which presents us with these terrible images (*of the destructive forces in the world*) speaks of the Godhead who embodies himself in them as the lover and friend of all creatures. But there is too the sterner aspect of his divine government of the world which meets us from the beginning, the aspect of destruction, and to ignore it is to miss the full reality of the divine Love and Peace and Calm and Eternity and even to throw on it an aspect of partiality and illusion, because the comforting exclusive form in which it is put is not borne out by the nature of the world in which we live. This world of our battle and labour is a fierce dangerous destructive devouring world in which life exists precariously and the soul and body of man move among enormous perils, a world in which by every step forward, whether we will it or no, something is crushed and broken, in which every breath of life is a breath too of death. To put away the responsibility for all that seems to us evil or terrible on the shoulders of a semi-omnipotent Devil, or to put it

aside as part of Nature, making an unbridgeable opposition between world-nature and God-Nature, as if Nature were independent of God, or to throw the responsibility on man and his sins, as if he had a preponderant voice in the making of this world or could create anything against the will of God, are clumsily comfortable devices in which the religious thought of India has never taken refuge. We have to look courageously in the face of the reality and see that it is God and none else who has made this world in his being and that so he has made it. We have to see that Nature devouring her children, Time eating up the lives of creatures, Death universal and ineluctable and the violence of the *Rudra* forces in man and Nature are also the supreme Godhead in one of his cosmic figures. We have to see that God the bountiful and prodigal creator, God the helpful, strong and benignant preserver is also God the devourer and destroyer. The torment of the couch of pain and evil on which we are racked is his touch as much as happiness and sweetness and pleasure. It is only when we see with the eye of the complete union and feel this truth in the depths of our being that we can entirely discover behind that mask too the calm and beautiful face of the all-blissful Godhead and in this touch that tests our imperfection the touch of the Friend and builder of the spirit in man. The discords of the worlds are God's discords and it is only by accepting and proceeding through them that we can arrive at the greater concords of his supreme harmony, the summits and thrilled vastnesses of his transcendent and his cosmic Ananda.

## 9. The Humanitarian Ideal

A wider formula has been provided by the secular mind

of man of which the basis is the ethical sense; for it distinguishes between the emotions sanctioned by the ethical sense and those that are egoistic and selfishly common and mundane. It is the works of altruism, philanthropy, compassion, benevolence, humanitarianism, service, labour for the well-being of man and all creatures that are to be our ideal; to shuffle off the coil of egoism and grow into a soul of self-abnegation that lives only or mainly for others or for humanity as a whole is the way of man's inner evolution according to this doctrine. Or if this is too secular and mental to satisfy the whole of our being, since there is a deeper religious and spiritual note there that is left out of account by the humanitarian formula, a religio-ethical foundation can be provided for it—and such was indeed its original basis. To the inner worship of the Divine or the Supreme by the devotion of the heart or to the pursuit of the Ineffable by the seeking of a highest knowledge can be added a worship through altruistic works or a preparation through acts of love, of benevolence, of service to mankind or to those around us. It is indeed by the religio-ethical sense that the law of universal good will or universal compassion or of love and service to the neighbour, the Vedantic, the Buddhistic, the Christian ideal, was created; only by a sort of secular refrigeration extinguishing the fervour of the religious element in it could the humanitarian ideal disengage itself and become the highest plane of a secular system of mental and moral ethics. For in the religious system this law of works is a means that ceases when its object is accomplished or a side issue; it is a part of the cult by which one adores and seeks the Divinity or it is a penultimate step of the excision of self in the passage to *Nirvana*. In the secular ideal it is promoted into an object in itself; it becomes a sign of the

moral perfection of the human being, or else it is a condition for a happier state of man upon earth, a better society, a more united life of the race. But none of these things satisfy the demand of the soul that is placed before us by the integral Yoga.

Altruism, philanthropy, humanitarianism, service are flowers of the mental consciousness and are at best the mind's cold and pale imitation of the spiritual flame of universal Divine Love. Not truly liberative from ego-sense, they widen it at most and give it a higher and larger satisfaction; impotent in practice to change man's vital life and nature, they only modify and palliate its action and daub over its unchanged egoistic essence. Or if they are intensely followed with an entire sincerity of the will, it is by an exaggerated amplification of one side of our nature; in that exaggeration there can be no clue for the full and perfect divine evolution of the many sides of our individualised being towards the universal and transcendent Eternal. Nor can the religio-ethical ideal be a sufficient guide,—for this is a compromise or compact of mutual concessions for mutual support between a religious urge which seeks to get a closer hold on earth by taking into itself the higher turns of ordinary human nature and an ethical urge which hopes to elevate itself out of its own mental hardness and dryness by some touch of a religious fervour. In making this compact religion lowers itself to the mental level and inherits the inherent imperfections of mind and its inability to convert and transform life. The mind is the sphere of the dualities and, just as it is impossible for it to achieve any absolute Truth but only truths relative or mixed with error, so it is impossible for it to achieve any absolute good; for moral good exists as a counterpart and corrective to evil and has evil always for its shadow, complement,

almost its reason for existence. But the spiritual consciousness belongs to a higher than the mental plane and there the dualities cease; for there falsehood confronted with the truth by which it profited through a usurping falsification of it and evil faced by the good of which it was a perversion or a lurid substitute, are obliged to perish for want of sustenance and to cease. The integral Yoga, refusing to rely upon the fragile stuff of mental and moral ideals, puts its whole emphasis in this field on three central dynamic processes—the development of the true soul or psychic being to take the place of the false soul of desire, the sublimation of human into divine love, the elevation of consciousness from its mental to its spiritual and supramental plane by whose power alone both the soul and the life-force can be utterly delivered from the veils and prevarications of the Ignorance.

## 10. The Way of Love

Love is the crown of all being and its way of fulfilment, that by which it rises to all intensity and all fullness and the ecstasy of utter self-finding. For if the Being is in its very nature consciousness and by consciousness we become one with it, therefore by perfect knowledge of it fulfilled in identity, yet is delight the nature of consciousness and of the acme of delight love is the key and the secret. And if will is the power of conscious being by which it fulfills itself and by union in will we become one with the Being in its characteristic infinite power, yet all the works of that power start from delight, live in the delight, have delight for their aim and end; love of the Being in itself and in all of itself that its power of consciousness manifests, is the way

to the perfect wideness of the Ananda. Love is the power and passion of the divine self-delight and without love we may get the rapt peace of its infinity, the absorbed silence of the *ānanda*, but not its absolute depth of richness and fullness. Love leads us from the suffering of division into the bliss of perfect union, but without losing that joy of the act of union which is the soul's greatest discovery and for which the life of the cosmos is a long preparation. Therefore to approach God by love is to prepare oneself for the greatest possible spiritual fulfilment.

Love fulfilled does not exclude knowledge, but itself brings knowledge; and the completer the knowledge, the richer the possibility of love. "By *bhakti*", says the Lord in the *Gita*, "shall a man know Me in all my extent and greatness and as I am in the principles of my being, and when he has known Me in the principles of my being, then he enters into Me." Love without knowledge is a passionate and intense, but blind, crude, often dangerous thing, a great power, but also a stumbling-block; love, limited in knowledge, condemns itself in its fervour and often by its very fervour to narrowness; but love leading to perfect knowledge brings the infinite and absolute union. Such love is not inconsistent with, but rather throws itself with joy into divine works; for it loves God and is one with him in all his being, and therefore in all beings, and to work for the world is then to feel and fulfil multitudinously one's love for God. This is the trinity of our powers, the union of all three in God to which we arrive when we start on our journey by the path of devotion, with Love for the Angel of the Way to find in the ecstasy of the divine delight of the All-Lover's being the fulfilment of ours, its secure home and blissful abiding-place and the centre of its universal radiation.

# IV

# Fulfilment of Life

## 1. The Divine Master

O Divine Master, grant that today may bring to us a completer consecration to Thy Will, a more integral gift of ourselves to Thy work, a more total forgetfulness of self, a greater illumination, a purer love. Grant that in a communion growing ever deeper, more constant and entire we may be united always more and more closely to Thee and become Thy servitors worthy of Thee. Remove from us all egoism, root out all petty vanity, greed and obscurity. May we be all ablaze with Thy divine Love; make us Thy torches in the world.

28-11-1913 The Mother

## 2. Unity, Mutuality and Harmony

Our nature, our consciousness is that of beings ignorant of each other, separated from each other, rooted in a divided ego, who must strive to establish some kind of relation between their embodied ignorances; for the urge to union and forces making for union are there in Nature. Individual and group harmonies of a comparative and qualified completeness are created, a social cohesion is accomplished; but in the mass the relations formed are constantly marred by imperfect sympathy, imperfect understanding, gross misunderstandings, strife, discord, unhappiness. It cannot be otherwise so long as there is no true union of consciousness

founded upon a nature of self-knowledge, inner mutual knowledge, inner realisation of unity, concord of our inner forces of being and inner forces of life. In our social building we labour to establish some approach to unity, mutuality, harmony, because without these things there can be no perfect social living; but what we build is a constructed unity, an association of interests and egos enforced by law and custom and imposing an artificial constructed order in which the interests of some prevail over the interests of others and only a half-accepted half-enforced, half natural half artificial accommodation keeps the social whole in being. Between community and community there is a still worse accommodation with a constant recurrence of the strife of collective ego with collective ego. This is the best that we can do and all our persistent readjustments of the social order can bring us nothing better than an imperfect structure of life.

It is only if our nature develops beyond itself, if it becomes a nature of self-knowledge, mutual understanding, unity, a nature of true being and true life that the result can be a perfection of ourselves and our existence, a life of true being, a life of unity, mutuality, harmony, a life of true happiness, a harmonious and beautiful life. If our nature is fixed in what it is, what it has already become, then no perfection, no real and enduring happiness is possible in earthly life; we must seek it not at all and do the best we can with our imperfections, or we must seek it elsewhere, in a supraterrestrial hereafter, or we must go beyond all such seeking and transcend life by an extinction of nature and ego in some Absolute from which this strange and unsatisfactory being of ours has come into existence. But if in us there is a spiritual being which is emerging and our present state is only an imperfection or half-emergence, if the Inconscient is a starting-point containing in

itself the potency of a superconscience and supernature which has to evolve, a veil of apparent Nature in which that greater consciousness is concealed and from which it has to unfold itself, if an evolution of being is the law, then what we are seeking for is not only possible but part of the eventual necessity of things. It is our spiritual destiny to manifest and become that supernature,—for it is the nature of our true self, our still occult, because unevolved, whole being. A nature of unity will then bring inevitably its life-result of unity, mutuality, harmony.

## 3. The Path of Spiritual Life

### (1)

### SILENCE AND SPEECH

There are two great forces in the universe, silence and speech. Silence prepares, speech creates. Silence acts, speech gives the impulse to action. Silence compels, speech persuades. The immense and inscrutable processes of the world all perfect themselves within, in a deep and august silence, covered by a noisy and misleading surface of sound—the stir of innumerable waves above, the fathomless resistless mass of the ocean's waters below. Men see the waves, they hear the rumour and the thousand voices and by these they judge the course of the future and the heart of God's intention; but in nine cases out of ten they misjudge. Therefore it is said that in history it is always the unexpected that happens. But it would not be the unexpected if men could turn their eyes from superficies and look into substance, if they accus

tomed themselves to put aside appearances and penetrate beyond them and the noise of life and listened rather to its silence.

(2)

## WHAT IS YOGA ?

Yoga is communion with God for knowledge, for love or for work. The yogin puts himself into direct relation with that which is omniscient and omnipotent within man and without him. He is in tune with the infinite, he becomes a channel for the strength of God to pour itself out upon the world whether through calm benevolence or active beneficence. When a man rises by putting from him the slough of self and lives for others and in the joys and sorrows of others;—when he works perfectly and with love and zeal, but casts away the anxiety for results and is neither eager for victory nor afraid of defeat;—when he devotes all his works to God and lays every thought, word and deed as an offering on the divine altar;—when he gets rid of fear and hatred, repulsion and disgust and attachment, and works like the forces of Nature, unhasting, unresting, inevitably, perfectly;—when he rises above the thought that he is the body or the heart or the mind or the sum of these and finds his own and true self;—when he becomes aware of his immortality and the unreality of death;—when he experiences the advent of knowledge and feels himself passive and the Divine Force working unresisted through his mind, his speech, his senses and all his organs;—when having thus abandoned whatever he is, does or has, to the Lord of all, the Lover and Helper of mankind, he dwells permanently

in Him and becomes incapable of grief, disquiet or false excitement,—that is Yoga.

(3)

THE PRACTICE OF INTEGRAL YOGA

The first step is a quiet mind—silence is a further step, but quietude must be there; and by a quiet mind I mean a mental consciousness within which sees thoughts arrive to it and move about but does not itself feel that it is thinking or identifying itself with the thoughts or call them its own. Thoughts, mental movements may pass through it as wayfarers appear and pass from elsewhere through a silent country—the quiet mind observes them or does not care to observe them, but, in either case, does not become active or lose its quietude.

* *

(4)

Remain quiet, open yourself and call the Divine *śakti* to confirm the calm and peace, to widen the consciousness and to bring into it as much light and power as it can at present receive and assimilate.

Take care not to be over-eager, as this may disturb again such quiet and balance as has been already established in the vital nature.

Have confidence in the final result and give time for the Power to do its work.

* *

(5)

Aspire always for the mind and psychic being to be filled with the true consciousness and experience and made ready. You must aspire especially for quietness, peace, a calm faith, an increasing steady wideness, for more and more knowledge, for a deep and intense but quiet devotion.

Do not be troubled by your surroundings and their opposition. These conditions are often imposed at first as a kind of ordeal. If you can remain tranquil and undisturbed and continue your *sādhanā* without allowing yourself to be inwardly troubled under these circumstances, it will help to give you a much needed strength; for the path of Yoga is always beset with inner and outer difficulties and the *sādhak* must develop a quiet, firm and solid strength to meet them.

* *

(6)

Faith, reliance upon God, surrender and self-giving to the Divine Power are necessary and indispensable. But reliance upon God must not be made an excuse for indolence, weakness and surrender to the impulses of the lower Nature: it must go along with untiring aspiration and a persistent rejection of all that comes in the way of the Divine Truth. The surrender to the Divine must not be turned into an excuse, a cloak or an occasion for surrender to one's own desires and lower movements or to one's ego or to some force of the Ignorance and darkness that puts on a false appearance of the Divine.

* *

(7)

To do anything by mental control is always difficult, when what is attempted runs contrary to the trend of human nature or of the personal nature. A strong will patiently and perseveringly turned towards its object can effect a change, but usually it takes a long time and the success at the beginning may be only partial and chequered by many failures.

To turn all actions automatically into worship cannot be done by thought control only; there must be a strong aspiration in the heart which will bring about some realisation or feeling of the presence of the One to whom worship is offered. The *bhakta* does not rely on his own effort alone, but on the Grace and Power of the Divine whom he adores.

* *

(8)

All sincere aspiration has its effect; if you are sincere you will grow into the divine life.

To be entirely sincere means to desire the divine Truth only, to surrender yourself more and more to the Divine Mother, to reject all personal demand and desire other than this one aspiration, to offer every action in life to the Divine and to do it as the work given without bringing in the ego. This is the basis of the divine life.

One cannot become altogether this at once, but if one aspires at all times and calls in always the aid of the Divine *śakti* with a true heart and straightforward will, one grows more and more into this consciousness.

* *

(9)

Desire takes a long time to get rid of entirely. But, if you can once get it out of the nature and realise it as a force coming from outside and putting its claws into the vital and physical, it will be easier to get rid of the invader. You are too accustomed to feel it as part of yourself or planted in you—that makes it more difficult for you to deal with its movements and dismiss its ancient control over you.

* *

(10)

Reject it entirely, not by struggling with it, but by drawing back from it, detaching yourself and refusing your consent; look at it as something not your own, but imposed on you by a force of Nature outside you. Refuse all consent to the imposition. If anything in your vital consents, insist on that part of you withdrawing its consent. Call in the Divine Force to help you in your withdrawal and refusal. If you can do this quietly and resolutely and patiently, in the end your inner will will prevail against the habit of the outer Nature.

* *

(11)

In this Yoga all depends on whether one can open to the Influence or not. If there is a sincerity in the aspiration and a patient will to arrive at the higher consciousness in spite

of all obstacles, then the opening in one form or another is sure to come. But it may take a long or short time according to the prepared or unprepared condition of the mind, heart and body; so if one has not the necessary patience, the effort may be abandoned owing to the difficulty of the beginning. There is no method in this Yoga except to concentrate, preferably in the heart, and call the Presence and Power of the Mother to take up the being and by the workings of her Force transform the consciousness; one can concentrate also in the head or between the eyebrows, but for many this is a too difficult opening. When the mind falls quiet and the concentration becomes strong and the aspiration intense, then there is a beginning of experience. The more the faith, the more rapid the result is likely to be. For the rest one must not depend on one's own efforts only, but succeed in establishing a contact with the Divine and a receptivity to the Mother's Power and Presence.

* *

(12)

The way of Yoga followed here has a different purpose from others,—for its aim is not only to rise out of the ordinary ignorant world-consciousness into the divine consciousness, but to bring the supramental power of that divine consciousness down into the ignorance of mind, life and body, to transform them, to manifest the Divine here and create a divine life in Matter. This is an exceedingly difficult aim and difficult Yoga; to many or most it will seem impossible. All the established forces of the ordinary ignorant world-consciousness are opposed to it and deny it and try to prevent it, and

the *sādhak* will find his own mind, life and body full of the most obstinate impediments to its realisation. If you can accept the ideal whole-heartedly, face all the difficulties, leave the past and its ties behind you and are ready to give up everything and risk everything for this divine possibility, then only can you hope to discover by experience the Truth behind it.

The *sādhanā* of this Yoga does not proceed through any set mental teaching or prescribed forms of meditation, *mantras* or others, but by aspiration, by a self-concentration inwards or upwards, by self-opening to an Influence, to the Divine Power above us and its workings, to the Divine Presence in the heart and by the rejection of all that is foreign to these things. It is only by faith, aspiration and surrender that this self-opening can come.

* *

(13)

The being of man is composed of these elements—the psychic behind supporting all, the inner mental, vital and physical, and the outer, quite external nature of mind, life and body which is their instrument of expression. But above all is the central being (*jīvātmā*) which uses them all for its manifestation: it is a portion of the Divine Self; but this reality of himself is hidden from the external man who replaces this inmost self and soul of him by the mental and vital ego. It is only those who have begun to know themselves that become aware of their true central being; but still it is always there standing behind the action of mind, life and body and is most directly represented by the psychic which

is itself a spark of the Divine. It is by the growth of the psychic element in one's nature that one begins to come into conscious touch with one's central being above. When that happens and the central being uses a conscious will to control and organise the movements of the nature, it is then that one has a real, a spiritual as opposed to a partial and merely mental or moral self-mastery.

* *

(14)

The phrase "central being" in our Yoga is usually applied to the portion of the Divine in us which supports all the rest and survives through death and birth. This central being has two forms—above, it is Jivatma, our true being, of which we become aware when the higher self-knowledge comes, —below, it is the psychic being which stands behind mind, body and life. The *jīvātmā* is above the manifestation in life and presides over it; the psychic being stands behind the manifestation in life and supports it.

* *

(15)

To go entirely inside in order to have experiences and to neglect the work, the external consciousness, is to be unbalanced, onesided in the *sādhanā*—for our Yoga is integral; so also to throw oneself outward and live in the external being alone is to be unbalanced, one-sided in the *sādhanā*. One

must have the same consciousness in inner experience and outward action and make both full of the Mother.

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(16)

To keep up work helps to keep up the balance between the internal experience and the external development; otherwise one-sidedness and want of measure and balance may develop. Moreover, it is necessary to keep the *sādhanā* of work for the Divine because in the end that enables the *sādhak* to bring out the inner progress into the external nature and life and helps the integrality of the *sādhanā*.

* *

(17)

Works are only thus outward and distracting when we have not found oneness of will and consciousness with the Supreme. When once that is found, works become the very power of knowledge and the very outpouring of love. If knowledge is the very state of oneness and the love its bliss, divine works are the living power of its light and sweetness. There is a movement of love, as in the aspiration of human love, to separate the lover and the loved in the enjoyment of their exclusive oneness away from world and from all others, shut up in the nuptial chambers of the heart....But still the widest love fulfilled in knowledge sees the world not as something other and hostile to this joy, but as the being of the

Beloved and all creatures as his being, and in that vision divine works find their joy and their justification.

* *

(18)

Our synthesis takes man as a spirit in mind much more than a spirit in body and assumes in him the capacity to begin on that level, to spiritualise his being by the power of the soul in mind opening itself directly to a higher spiritual force and being and to perfect by that higher force so possessed and brought into action the whole of his nature.

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(19)

THE ESSENCE OF YOGA

To bring the Divine Love and Beauty and Ananda into the world is, indeed, the whole crown and essence of our Yoga. But it has always seemed to me impossible unless there comes as its support and foundation and guard the Divine Truth—what I call the Supramental—and its Divine Power. Otherwise Love itself blinded by the confusions of this present consciousness may stumble in its human receptacles and, even otherwise, may find itself unrecognised, rejected or rapidly degenerating and lost in the frailty of man's inferior nature. But when it comes in the divine truth and power, Divine Love descends first as something transcendent and universal and out of that transcendence and universality it applies

itself to persons according to the Divine Truth and Will creating a vaster, greater, purer personal love than any the human mind or heart can now imagine. It is when one has felt this descent that one can be really an instrument for the birth and action of the Divine Love in the world.

* *

(20)

The Divine gives itself to those who give themselves without reserve and in all their parts to the Divine. For them the calm, the light, the power, the bliss, the freedom, the wideness, the heights of knowledge, the seas of *ānanda*.

## 4. The Divine Superman

This is thy work and the aim of thy being and that for which thou art here, to become the divine superman and a perfect vessel of the Godhead. All else that thou hast to do, is only a making thyself ready or a joy by the way or a fall from the purpose. But the goal is this and the purpose is this and not in the power of the way or the joy by the way but in the joy of the goal is the greatness and the delight of thy being. The joy of the way is because that which is drawing thee is also with thee on thy path and the power to climb was given thee that thou mightest mount to thy own summits.

If thou hast a duty, this is thy duty; if thou askest what shall be thy aim, let this be thy aim; if thou demandest pleasure, there is no greater joy, for all other joy is broken or limited, the joy of a dream or the joy of a sleep or the joy of the self-

forgetting. But this is the joy of thy whole being. For if thou sayest what is my being, this is thy being, the Divine, and all else is only its broken or its perverse appearance. If thou seekest the Truth, this is the Truth. Place it before thee and in all things be faithful to it.

It has been well said by one who saw but through a veil and mistook the veil for the face that thy aim is to become thyself; and he said well again that the nature of man is to transcend himself. This is indeed his nature and that is indeed the divine aim of his self-transcending.

What then is the self that thou hast to transcend and what is the Self that thou hast to become? For it is here that thou shouldst make no error; for this error, not to know thyself, is the fountain of all thy grief and the cause of all thy stumbling.

That which thou hast to transcend is the self that thou appearest to be, and that is man as thou knowest him, the apparent *puruṣa*. And what is this man? He is a mental being enslaved to life and matter; and where he is not enslaved to life and matter, he is the slave of his mind. But this is a great and heavy servitude; for to be the slave of mind is to be the slave of the false, the limited and the apparent.

The Self that thou hast to become is that self that thou art within behind the veil of mind and life and matter. It is to be the spiritual, the divine, the superman, the real *puruṣa*. For that which is above the mental being is the superman. It is to be the master of thy mind, thy life and thy body; it is to be a king over Nature of whom thou art now the tool, lifted above her who now has thee under her feet. It is to be free and not a slave, to be one and not divided, to be immortal and not obscured by death, to be full of light and not darkened, to be full of bliss and not the sport of grief and suffering, to be

uplifted into power and not cast down into weakness. It is to live in the Infinite and possess the finite. It is to live in God and be one with Him in His being. To become thyself is to be this and all that flows from it.

Be free in thyself, and therefore free in thy mind, free in thy life and thy body. For the Spirit is freedom.

Be one with God and all beings; live in thyself and not in thy little ego. For the Spirit is unity.

Be thyself immortal, and put not thy faith in death; for death is not of thyself, but of thy body. For the Spirit is immortality.

To be immortal is to be infinite in being and consciousness and bliss; for the Spirit is infinite and that which is finite lives only by his infinity.

These things thou art, therefore thou canst become all these; but if thou art not these things, then thou couldst never become them. What is within thee, that alone can be revealed in thy being. Thou appearest indeed to be other than this, but wherefore shouldst thou enslave thyself to appearances ?

Rather arise, transcend thyself, become thyself. Thou art man and the whole nature of man is to become more than himself. He was the man-animal, he has become more than the animal man. He is the thinker, the craftsman, the seeker after beauty. He shall be more than the thinker, he shall be the seer of knowledge; he shall be more than the craftsman, he shall be the creator and master of his creation; he shall be more than the seeker of beauty, for he shall enjoy all beauty and all delight. Physical, he seeks for this immortal substance; vital, he seeks after immortal life and the infinite power of his being; mental and partial in knowledge, he seeks after the whole light and the utter vision.

To possess these is to become the superman; for he is to

rise out of Mind into the Supermind. Call it the Divine mind or Knowledge or the Supermind; it is the Power and Light of the Divine Will and the Divine Consciousness. By the Supermind the Spirit saw and created Himself in the worlds, by that he lives in them and governs them. By that he is *swarat*, *samrat*, self-ruler and all-ruler.

Supermind is superman; therefore to rise beyond mind is the condition.

To be the superman is to live the Divine Life, to be a god; for the gods are the powers of God. Be a power of God in humanity.

To live in the Divine Being and let the consciousness and bliss, the will and knowledge of the Spirit possess thee and play with thee and through thee, this is the meaning.

This is the transfiguration of thyself on the mountain. It is to discover God as thyself and reveal Him to thyself in all things. Live in his being, shine with his light, act with his power, rejoice with his bliss. Be that Fire and that Sun and that Ocean. Be that joy and that greatness and that beauty.

When thou hast done this even in part, thou hast attained to the first steps of supermanhood.

## 5. The Call to Man

"O Force-compelled, Fate-driven earth-born race,
O petty adventurers in an infinite world
And prisoners of a dwarf humanity,
How long will you tread the circling tracks of mind
Around your little self and petty things ?
But not for a changeless littleness were you meant,

Not for vain repetition were you built;
Out of the Immortal's substance you were made;
Your actions can be swift revealing steps,
Your life a changeful mould for growing gods.
A Seer, a strong Creator, is within,
The immaculate Grandeur broods upon your days,
Almighty powers are shut in Nature's cells.
A greater destiny waits you in your front:
This transient earthly being if he wills
Can fit his acts to a transcendent scheme.
He who now stares at the world with ignorant eyes
Hardly from the Inconscient's night aroused,
That look at images and not at Truth
Can fill those orbs with an immortal's sight.
Yet shall the godhead grow within your hearts,
You shall awake into the spirit's air
And feel the breaking walls of mortal mind
And hear the message which left life's heart dumb
And look through Nature with sun-gazing lids;
And blow your conch-shells at the Eternal's gate.
Authors of earth's high change, to you it is given
To cross the dangerous spaces of the soul
And touch the mighty Mother stark awake
And meet the Omnipotent in this house of flesh
And make of life the million-bodied One."

## 6. The Hour of God

There are moments when the Spirit moves among men and the breath of the Lord is abroad upon the waters of our being; there are others when it retires and men are

left to act in the strength or the weakness of their own egoism. The first are periods when even a little effort produces great results and changes destiny; the second are spaces of time when much labour gives to the making of a little result. It is true that the latter may prepare the former, may be the little smoke of sacrifice going up to heaven which calls down the rain of God's bounty.

Unhappy is the man or the nation which, when the divine moment arrives, is found sleeping or unprepared to use it, because the lamp has not been kept trimmed for the welcome and the ears are sealed to the call. But thrice woe to them who are strong and ready, yet waste the force or misuse the moment; for them is irreparable loss or a great destruction.

In the hour of God cleanse they soul of all self-deceit and hypocrisy and vain self-flattering that thou mayst look straight into thy spirit and hear that which summons it. All insincerity of nature, once thy defence against the eye of the Master and the light of the ideal, becomes now a gap in thy armour and invites the blow. Even if thou conquer for the moment, it is the worse for thee, for the blow shall come afterwards and cast thee down in the midst of thy triumph. But being pure cast aside all fear; for the hour is often terrible, a fire and a whirlwind and a tempest, a treading of the winepress of the wrath of God; but he who can stand up in it in the truth of his purpose is he who shall stand; even though he fall, he shall rise again; even though he seem to pass on the wings of the wind, he shall return. Nor let worldly prudence whisper too closely in thy ear; for it is the hour of the unexpected.

## 7. O Mother of Radiances

*An inner fullness has come in like the coming in of light in dark caves. It fills, it illumines, it vibrates the multiple strings of life ; it has found the contact with the forgotten achievements of the past to enable me to start the new ones of the future on the basis of the changing formations of the present. The currents of life well up to meet the descending rays of light from the upper heavens for transmutation of the base and the dark into the luminous and the true, for transmutation of the ugly and the wrong into the beautiful and the right.*

*O Mother of Radiances, you have dawned in the narrow horizons of my mind. Out of its depthless rigidities, in the midst of its walled-up spaces you have created a heart-like something that will live its eternal life. You have revealed to me a chamber alive and warm within the mind's substanceless polar regions and there I can safely retire and find in you my refuge.*

*The lower network of moving forces remains, but I feel your presence in its midst. The higher network of moving forces remains, and here you have stepped in also shedding a warmth of life that was not there before, you have turned the dull grey luminosity into a brilliance of living waters. Your active and living presence is everywhere ; you have heeded my words of aspiration, the fire of my demand for your omnipresence. More than what I ignorantly sought for, you have revealed to me. You are intimate and one with me when in truth and in law and yet away and far off from me when in error and in falsehood.*

*When there are no more darkening shadows about me ; when you see me bared of all shams and shows in every part of the being ; when you see in every cell of my body an eternal home for you and an eternal temple ; when you see me one with you in*

*identity and still worshipping you; when you melt the compact gold of knowledge in the living and running waters of devotion; when you break my earth and release its energies; when you turn my pride into power in your hands and my ignorance into light, my narrowness into wideness, my selfishness into a true gathering together of forces in one centre, my greed into a capacity of untiring search after the truth for the attainment of its substances, my egoism into the true and conscious instrumental centre, my mind into a channel for you to descend, my heart into your hearth of pure fire and flame, my life into a pure and translucent substance for your handling, my body into a conscious vessel for holding what of you is meant for me; then, O Mother of Radiances, my aim in life now and hereafter will be fulfilled in the true and right and vast way. Aspiration wakes in me! Achieve in me all that I flame for!*

# THE MOTHER

## I

## General

## 1. This Mystery of Existence*

Have you ever asked yourself why there is this universe at all, at least this earth with which we are so much concerned and which seems to us so real, so authentic ? It would perhaps be very wise on your part if you did not. I have often spoken to you of Theon.[1] He was truly a sage in his own way. People used to come to him and ask questions. Many asked why there was a universe. He would answer, "But what is that to you ? "Some would ask, "Why is the universe like this ?" To that he would say, "It is what it is, how does it matter ?" Others again would remark, "I do not consider the world a satisfactory affair." There, we begin to come more to the point. To those who find the world unsatisfactory I would say, "Get to work, try to change it. Find a way that it may be otherwise, that it may be made better. Things are what they are, it is no use speculating over that and getting worried. Seek for the means of remedy, so that things may be made what they should be. Why are things what they are ? Not that one cannot know the reason, although one may not always be sure of it. The best thing to do is to take whatever is as it is and try to change it towards that which it should be. Now the wonder of it is that if you are sincere, if you want to know sincerely and work sincerely, you will come to know why things are what they are—the cause, the origin and the process, for they are all one. There is one truth at the base

* This selection and the next one, and all those in Section II are talks of The Mother as reported by Sri Nolini Kanta Gupta.

[1] An occultist whom the Mother knew in France.

of things; if that were not there, nothing would be. If you seize that truth, you seize at the same time the origin of the creation and the means of changing it as well. In other words, if you are in contact with the Divine—for the Divine is that base—you are in possession of the key to all things, you know the why, the how and the process for change. One thing to do then is to start doing the thing. But you might say, it is too much, too difficult, too big for you, to work in the world or for the world. Well then, start with yourself. You are a little mass of substance, a symbol or representative of the universe. Let your work then be to form and fashion that particle. Concentrate upon it, go within, even within that little person of yourself you will find the long looked-for key."

## 2. Ascending Evolution in Nature

There is an ascending evolution in nature which goes from the stone to the plant, from the plant to the animal, from the animal to man. Because man is, for the moment, the last rung at the summit of the ascending evolution, he considers himself as the final stage in this ascension and believes there can be nothing on earth superior to him. In that he is mistaken. In his physical nature he is yet almost wholly an animal, a thinking and speaking animal, but still an animal in his material habits and instincts. Undoubtedly, nature cannot be satisfied with such an imperfect result; she endeavours to bring out a being who will be to man what man is to the animal, a being who will remain a man in its external form, and yet whose consciousness will rise far above the mental and its slavery to ignorance.

Sri Aurobindo came upon earth to teach this truth to men. He told them that man is only a transitional being living on a mental consciousness, but with the possibility of acquiring a new consciousness, the Truth-consciousness, and capable of living a life perfectly harmonious, good and beautiful, happy and fully conscious. During the whole of his life upon earth, Sri Aurobindo gave all his time to establish in himself this consciousness he called supramental, and to help those gathered around him to realise it.

You have the immense privilege of having come quite young to the *Ashram*, that is to say, still plastic and capable of being moulded according to this new ideal and thus become the representatives of the new race. Here, in the Ashram, you are in the most favourable conditions with regard to the environment, the influence, the teaching and the example, to awaken in you this supramental consciousness and to grow according to its law.

Now, all depends on your will and your sincerity. If you have the will no more to belong to ordinary humanity, no more to be merely evolved animals; if your will is to become men of the new race realising Sri Aurobindo's supramental ideal, living a new and higher life upon a new earth, you will find here all the necessary help to achieve your purpose; you will profit fully by your stay in the *Ashram* and eventually become living examples for the world.

### 3. An International University Centre

The conditions under which men live upon earth are the result of their state of consciousness. To seek to change the conditions without changing the consciousness is a vain

chimera. All who have had the perception of what could be and should be done to improve the situation, in the different domains of human life, economical, political, social, financial, educational or hygienic, are precisely the individuals who have developed their consciousness more or less to an exceptional degree and put themselves in contact with higher planes of consciousness. But their ideas remained on the whole theoretical; or, if an attempt was ever made to realise them practically, it always failed lamentably in the long or short run; for no human organisation can change radically unless human consciousness itself changes. Prophets of a new humanity have followed one another, religions spiritual or social, have been created, their beginnings were at times full of promise: but, as humanity was not transformed at heart, the old errors arising from human nature itself have reappeared gradually and after a time it was found that one was left almost at the same spot from where one had started with so much hope and enthusiasm. In this effort, however, to improve human conditions there have always been two tendencies, which although apparently contrary to each other should rather be complementary and together work out the progress. One seeks a collective reorganisation, something that would lead towards an effective unity of mankind: the other declares that all progress is made first by the individual and insists that it is the individual who should be given conditions in which he can progress freely. Both are equally true and necessary, and our effort should be directed along both the lines. Collective progress and individual progress are interdependent. Before the individual can take a leap forward, it is necessary that something of an antecedent progress be achieved in the collective life. A way has therefore to be found whereby the two-fold progress can go on simultaneously.

It is in answer to this pressing need that Sri Aurobindo conceived the scheme of his International University, so that the élite of humanity may be made ready who would be able to work for the progressive unification of the race and who at the same time would be prepared to embody the new force descending upon earth to transform it. Some broad ideas would serve as the basis for organising this university centre and as a guide for the programme of studies. Most of these have already been dealt with in the various writings of Sri Aurobindo and in the series of articles on Education that have appeared in the *Bulletin of Physical Education.*

The most important one is that the unity of the human race can be achieved neither through uniformity nor through domination and subjection. A synthetic organisation of all nations, each one occupying its own place in accordance with its own genius and the role it has to play in the whole, can alone effect a comprehensive and progressive unification which may have some chance of enduring. And if the synthesis is to be a living thing, the grouping should be done around a central idea as high and wide as possible, and in which all tendencies, even the most contradictory, would find their respective places. That idea is to give man the conditions of life necessary for preparing him to manifest the new force that will create the race of tomorrow.

All urge of rivalry, all struggle for precedence and domination, should disappear giving place to a will for harmonious organisation, for clear sighted and effective collaboration.

To make this possible, children from their very early age, must be accustomed not merely to the idea but to its practice. Therefore the International University Centre will be international not because students from all countries

will be admitted here, nor because the education will be given in their own mother tongue, but particularly because the cultures of the different regions of the earth will be represented here in such a way as to be accessible to all, not merely intellectually, in ideas, theories, principles and languages, but also vitally in habits and customs, in art under all forms—painting, sculpture, music, architecture, decoration—and physically too through natural scenery, dress, games, sports, industries and food. A kind of world-exhibition has to be organised in which all the countries will be represented in a concrete and living manner; the ideal is that every nation with a very definite culture would have a pavilion representing that culture, built on a model that most displays the habits of the country : it will exhibit the nation's most representative products, natural as well as manufactures, products also that best express its intellectual and artistic genius and its spiritual tendencies. Each nation would thus find a practical and concrete interest in this cultural synthesis and collaborate in the work by taking over the charge of the pavilion that represents it. A lodging house also could be attached, large or small according to the need, where students of the same nationality would be accommodated: they will thus enjoy the very culture of their own motherland and at the same time receive at the centre the education which will introduce them as well to other cultures existing upon earth. Thus the international education will not be simply theoretical, on the school bench, but practical in all details of existence.

A general idea of the organisation only is given here : the application in details will be shown gradually in the *Bulletin of Physical Education* as things are actually carried out.

The first aim then will be to help individuals to become conscious of the fundamental genius of the nation to which

they belong and at the same time to put them in contact with the modes of living of other nations so that they may know and respect equally the true spirit of all the countries upon earth. For all world organisations, to be real and to be able to live, must be based upon mutual respect and understanding between nation and nation as well as between individual and individual. It is only in the collective order and organisation, in a collaboration based upon mutual goodwill that lies the possibility of man being lifted out of the painful chaos where he is now. It is with this aim and in this spirit that all human problems will be studied at the University Centre : and their solution will be given in the light of the Supramental Knowledge which Sri Aurobindo has revealed in his writings.

* *

Even as the individual has a psychic being which is his true self, governing more or less openly his destiny, each nation too has its psychic being which is its true self, moulding its destiny from behind the veil : it is the soul of the country, the national genius, the spirit of the people, the centre of national aspiration, the fountain-head of all that is beautiful, noble, great and generous in the life of a country. True patriots feel its presence as a tangible reality. It is this which in India has been made almost into a divine being and all who love truly their country call it " Mother India " (*Bharat Mata*), and it is to her that they daily address a prayer for the welfare of their country. It is she who symbolises and incarnates the true ideal of the country, its true mission in the world.

* *

One would like to see in other countries too the same veneration for the national soul, the same aspiration to become fit instruments for the manifestation of its highest ideal, the same ardour towards progress and perfection leading each people to identify itself with its national soul and so find its true nature and role, making thereby each one a living and immortal being in spite of all accidents of history.

# II

# Food and Allied Questions

## 1. On Food

I believe the primitive man was very near to the animal. He lived more by instinct than by intelligence. He ate when he was hungry without any kind of fixed rule. He might have had his own tastes and preferences, we do not know much about it; but we know that he lived much more physically, much less mentally or even vitally than now.

Originally very material in nature, much like the animal, man in the course of his progress through centuries or millenniums became more and more mental, more and more vital. And as he grew more mental and more vital, refinement became possible, the intelligence increased, but the possibility too of perversion and deformation. It is one thing to educate the senses so as to bring into them every variety of refinement, growth, knowledge, appreciation, taste and all that, meaning a progress in consciousness : it is quite another to be attached to the object of your sense, to have greed, to be a glutton.

You can make a very thorough study of taste, for example: you can acquire a detailed knowledge of the different tastes of different things, the association of idea or notion of taste, which means not perhaps a progress in the vital, but at least a development of this particular sense. That is permissible but there is a great difference between that and eating out of greed, thinking of food all the while, eating not because of its need but because of desire and gluttony.

Indeed, people who try to develop their taste are rarely very much attached to food. They cultivate their taste for

developing, refining their sense, not for the sake of eating. In the same way the artist, a painter for example, trains his eyes so that he can know how to appraise the beauty of form and colour, line and design, composition and harmony that is found in physical nature. It is not mere desire or hunger that drives him, it is taste, culture, development of the sense of sight, appreciation of beauty that is his preoccupation. Generally, artists who are truly artists, who love and live their art, who are in search of beauty are people who have not many desires. They live in their aesthetic sensibility, in their senses turned to the enjoyment and creation of beauty. They are not the kind of people who live by their vital impulses and physical desires.

In a general way, education, culture, refinement of the senses are the means of curing movements of crude instinct and desire and passion. To obliterate them is not curing them; instead, they have to be cultivated, intellectualised, refined. That is the surest way of curing them. To give them their maximum growth in view of the progress and development of consciousness, so that one may attain to a sense of harmony and exactitude of perception is part of culture and education for the human being. Men cultivate their intelligence in the same way: they read, they think, compare and contrast, they make a study. In this way their mind enlarges, it becomes wider and more comprehensive than the mind of those who live without a mental education, who possess only a few ideas that perhaps even contradict each other. They are moved wholly by these as they have no other, they think these are the only ideas that should govern them: such minds are extremely narrow and limited. On the other hand, they who have cultivated their intelligence, who have studied and thought, who have widened

their mental range a little and so can see and note and compare other ideas and possible notions discover easily that it is sheer ignorance and absurdity to be attached to a limited set of ideas and to consider that alone as the expression of truth.

This training of taste, this education of the senses is a very good, a necessary means to prepare the consciousness for a higher development. There are persons who are very crude and very simple in nature. They can have a strong inspiration and arrive at a certain spiritual growth but the foundation will always remain of a somewhat inferior quality: and when they come back to their ordinary consciousness they find there great obstacles : for the stuff is missing there, there are not, in the vital and physical consciousness, elements enough to enable it to support a descent of the higher force.

## 2. What Happens when One Eats Meat ?

I shall tell you then a story. I knew a young Swedish woman who was doing *sādhanā*. Normally she was a vegetarian, by habit as well as by inclination. One day she was invited to a dinner. She was given fowl to eat. She did not like to make a fuss and quietly ate her fowl. Now at night she found herself, in dream of course, in a basket and her head in between two bits of sticks and being shaken, shaken to and fro. She felt very unhappy, very miserable. And then she saw herself head down and legs up in the air and being shaken, shaken continually. She was thoroughly miserable. All on a sudden she felt she was being skinned, peeled and how painful it all was ! And then someone came with a knife and cut off her head. She woke up at that. She told

me the story and said she never had such a frightful nightmare in her life. She had thought nothing of this kind before going to bed; it must have been simply the consciousness of the poor chicken that entered into her and she experienced in dream all the agonies of this creature when it was being carried to the market, its feathers pulled out and in the end the head severed. That is what happens. In other words, along with the meal that you take, you absorb also, in a large or small measure, the consciousness of the animal whose flesh you swallow. Of course it is nothing serious, but it is not always pleasant. Yet obviously it does not help you to be more on the side of man than on that of the animal. Primitive men, we know, were much nearer the animal level and used to take raw meat: that gave them evidently more strength and energy than cooked meat. They used to kill an animal, tear it to pieces and bite into the flesh. That is how they were robust and forceful. Also it was for this reason perhaps that there was in their intestines an organ called appendix in a much bigger size than it is now: for it had to digest raw meat. As men however started cooking their food and found it more tasty that way, the organ too gradually diminished in size and fell into atrophy; now it does not serve any purpose, it is an encumbrance and often a source of illness. This means that it is time to change the diet and take to something less bestial. It depends, however, on the state of the consciousness of each person. An ordinary man, who leads an ordinary life, has ordinary aspirations, thinks of nothing else than earning his livelihood, keeping good health and rearing a family, need not pick and choose, except on purely hygienic grounds. He may with benefit eat meat or anything else that he considers helpful and useful.

But if you wish to move from the ordinary life to a higher

life, the problem acquires an interest. And again, for a higher life if you wish to move up still farther and prepare yourself for transformation, then the problem becomes very important. For there are certain foods that help the body to become more refined and others that keep it down to the level of animalism. But it is only then that the question acquires an importance, not before. Before you come to that point, you have a lot of other things to do. It is certainly better to purify your mind, purify your vital before you think of purifying your body. For even if you take all possible precautions and live physically with every care to eat only the things that help to refine the body, but the mind and the vital remain full of desire and inconscience and obscurity and all the rest, your care will serve no purpose. Your body will become perhaps weak, disharmonious with your inner life and drop off one day.

You must begin from within. I have said a hundred times, you must begin from above. You must purify first the higher region and then purify the lower. I do not mean by this that you should give yourself up to all the licences that degrade the body. I do not mean that at all. I am not advising you not to control your desires. What I mean is this : do not try to be an angel in the body before you are already something of the kind in your mind and in your vital. For that will bring about a dislocation, a lack of balance. And I have always said that to maintain the balance, all the parts must progress together. In trying to bring light into one part you must not leave another part in darkness. You must not leave any obscure corner anywhere.

## 3. How Does Fasting Bring a State of Receptivity ?

Usually the vital being is concentrated very much in the body. And when the body is well fed, it takes its force and energy through the food—it is one way of absorbing energy, almost the only way, at least the more important way, under the existing conditions of life, but it is a tamasic way.

This energy that one takes in, if you reflect upon the matter you will easily admit, is the vital energy that is in the plant or the animal and logically it is of an inferior quality to that which should be man's who is supposed to be on a higher level in the scale of species. So it is impossible to eat without absorbing a large quantity of unconsciousness. Inevitably that makes you heavy and dense. And if you are in the habit of eating much, a good part of your consciousness is engaged in digesting and assimilating what you eat. Thus if you do not take food, that already frees you from this unconsciousness that you have no longer to assimilate and transform within you : that liberates energy in you. Then, as there is an instinct in the being to make up for energy spent, if you do not gather it from food i.e. from below, you make automatically an effort to draw it from the universal vital energy which is free around you. And if you can assimilate that energy, assimilate it directly, then there is no limit to your energy.

It is not like your stomach which can digest only a limited quantity of food and this food again can give out only a portion—a very small portion—of its energy. For after the energy spent in swallowing, masticating, digesting etc. how much of it still remains available ? If, on the other hand, you learn—you learn instinctively, it is a kind of instinct—to draw from the universal energy which is freely available in the world and in any quantity, you can take it in and absorb as much as

you are capable of. Thus, as I have said, when there is not the support from below coming from food, the body makes an automatic movement to get the wanted energy from the environment. It gets at times more than enough, even an overdose and that puts you in a state of tension or stimulation. And if your body is strong and can remain without food for some time, then you can maintain your poise and utilise the energies in all ways—to make inner progress, for example, to become more conscious, to change your nature. But if your body has not much reserve, it gets easily weakened by fast, then there occurs a disharmony between the intensity of the energies you absorb and the capacity of the body to hold them and that upsets you. You lose your poise, the equilibrium of the forces is broken and anything can happen. In any case, if such a thing happens, you lose a good deal of self-control, you get excited and this unnatural excitement you consider as a higher state of consciousness. But it is an inner unbalance, nothing more. Otherwise, in that state your senses get refined and receptive. Thus when you fast and do not draw energy from below, if you smell a flower, you feel nourished, the perfume you breathe in serves as food, it gives you energy and this you would not have known but for the fasting.

In this condition certain faculties become intensified and that is taken as a spiritual effect. But in reality it has very little to do with spirituality. However, instead of thinking all the while about food, how to get and eat it, if one were to take to fasting for the sake of freeing oneself from the bondage of food preoccupation, rising a little in the scale of consciousness, it would be a good thing. If you have the faith it will do you good, it will purify you, make you progress a little. In that way it is all right: it will not do any harm to your body

excepting making it a little thinner. But if you fast and then continually turn back to it and think of the food that you might have eaten or are likely to eat after the fasting, well, such fasting is worse than feasting.

Maeterlinck,—you must have heard of him, the author of *The Blue Bird*—was a very corpulent person. As he had some sense of beauty he disliked corpulency, and in order to reduce it or keep it within bounds, he took to fasting for one day a week regularly. As he was an intelligent man, he did not on that day give any thought to food, but he kept himself wholly engaged in writing and studying. Fasting was of use to him.

The moral then is this: you must not think about food: you should regulate your life in such an automatic manner that you do not have to think about it. Eat at fixed hours, reasonably, calmly, quietly, composedly. Do not eat too much; for then you will have to concern yourself with digestion: that would be a disagreeable thing; it will make you lose time. Eat just what is necessary. You must give up all desire and attraction, all vital movement. When you eat only because the body needs food, then the body will tell you in a very precise and exact manner when it has just the amount necessary. It is only when you have notions in your mind or desires in your vital, when for example, you are in love with a particular item, that you eat in multiples of the quantity needed and oppress your body and make it lose its natural perception.

## 4. Opening to the Divine

You are to open yourself to the Divine and receive Him. Usually you open yourself in all directions to everything

and everybody in the world. You open your surface being and receive there all influences from all quarters. So inside you there comes about what we can call a hotch-potch of all contrary and contradictory movements : and that creates difficulties without number. Now instead of that, live away from the surface, from the outside and open up to the Divine and receive nothing but the Divine Force. If you can do that, all difficulties practically disappear. But, of course, the trouble is there. Unless one is alchemically conditioned, it is an impossibility to have relations with people, to talk to them, to deal with them, have interchanges with them and yet not absorb something out of them. If one can surround oneself with an atmosphere that acts as a filter, then all that comes from outside is checked and sifted before it reaches you or touches you. That needs a good training and a large experience. That is why people in ancient days who wanted an easier path took to solitude in the depths of the forest, on the top of a hill or in a cave so that they might not have to do with people—for that naturally reduces undesirable interchange. Only, it has also been found that such people begin to take an enormous interest in the life of animals and plants instead of men : for it is indeed difficult to do without interchange with something or other. So the best thing would be to face the problem squarely, to clothe yourself with an atmosphere totally concentrated on the Divine so that whatever passes across is filtered in its passage. And further, there is the question of food. The body is obliged to take in foreign matter in order to subsist, it would therefore absorb at the same time a fair quantity of inert and unconscious forces or of some not very desirable consciousness. I once spoke to you of the consciousness that one absorbs with food, there is also unconsciousness that one absorbs in the same way.

That is why in many systems of Yoga you are advised to offer first to the Divine your food and then eat: it means calling down the Divine into your food before absorbing it. Offering means putting in contact: the food is put in contact with the Divine i.e. put under His Influence. This is a very good, a very useful procedure; if you know how to do it, it would diminish very much the labour of the inner transformation that one has to do. For in the world we live in solidarity with all others. You cannot take in a single breath of air without absorbing the vibrations, the numberless vibrations that come from all kinds of movement and all kinds of people. So if you want to keep yourself intact, you must, as I have said, maintain yourself in the condition of a filter allowing nothing undesirable to enter. Or put on a mask as one does when crossing an infested and poisoned locality, or do something similar.

One must have around oneself an atmosphere so condensed, condensed in a spirit of total surrender, that nothing can enter without being automatically filtered. There are wicked thoughts, evil will about you, harmful formations sent out by bad people. The air pullulates with these: dark noisome bacilli. It is so troublesome to be always on the look-out, at every step to be on one's guard, to move slowly with care and cautions and precautions; even then one is not sure. But if you cover yourself with the cloak of light, the light of a happy, sincere surrender and aspiration, that is a wonderful filter, that gives you automatic protection. The undesirable forces not only cannot enter, they are thrown back upon their originator, the attackers themselves become their own victims.

## 5. The Origin of Desire

From where does desire come ? Buddha said that it came from Ignorance. It is almost that. Desire is something in the being which imagines that it requires an object other than itself for its satisfaction. This is sheer ignorance, proved by the fact that in ninety-nine cases out of a hundred when one has the thing desired, one no more cares for it.

At its very origin, I think, it was an obscure need for growth or increase. In the lowest forms of life we find love transformed into an instinctive and irresistible need for enlarging, swelling, absorbing, adding to it another body. This need to take in is desire. So perhaps if you go back far enough into the last depths of inconscience, you will see that the ultimate source of desire is love : it is love in its most dark and inconscient form. It is, as I said, a need for accretion, an attraction for an outside object in order to embrace it, swallow it, make it part of oneself and so grow bigger. Now, suppose you have before you something beautiful, harmonious, pleasing : if you have the true consciousness, you enjoy and are happy to the full, by simply looking at the thing, by having an inner contact in consciousness with the beauty and harmony that is there. And there the matter ends. You have the joy and that is all. Such a movement is very common in the artist. He sees a beautiful person, he has the joy of observing the grace of the form, the harmony of the movements and all that. But it does not go beyond. He is perfectly happy, perfectly satisfied when he has seen something beautiful.

An ordinary consciousness, on the contrary, I mean, very ordinary, flat as ordinary things are, when it sees something beautiful, whether it is a material object or a person, it im-

mediately jumps at it, shouting, "I must have it !" It is pitiable, isn't it ? And with such a consciousness you cannot even enjoy beauty, for the anguish of desire will pursue you. You lose true enjoyment but do not get anything in return. There is no happiness in desiring something. It only puts you in an unhappy state.

Buddha also said that there was a greater joy in overcoming a desire than in satisfying it. Everybody can make this experiment and have the experience. It is quite interesting to do so.

When you give up a desire, there occurs at the moment an inner communion with your psychic being and that is why one gets a greater joy in rejecting a desire than in fulfilling it. Besides, when you do satisfy your desire always there is a bitter after-taste somewhere. There is no desire which when satisfied does not leave this bitterness in you, as when you have taken too sweet a thing, the mouth becomes full of a bitter taste. The nature of desire is like that. You must try to throw it away, but sincerely. You must not pretend doing it and keep the thing in a corner. In that case it will surely bring misery to you.

## 6. If One Has a Sense of Beauty Can He Be Cruel ?

It is a psychological problem. It depends upon the region where there is the sense of beauty. There may be a physical sense of beauty, a vital sense of beauty and a mental sense of beauty. If you have the moral sense of beauty, that is to say, a sense of decency and nobility, you can never be cruel. You will be always generous ; your movements will consist of fine gestures. But, as I say often, man is composed of

many different bits pieced together. For example, I frequented very much the artists. I knew all the great artists of the end of the last century and the beginning of the present. I lived among them. They had really a great sense of beauty. But morally some were very cruel. It is because when you see an artist in his study at work you find him living in an atmosphere of great beauty, but when you see the gentleman at home, he is a different person, having very little contact with the artist he was. Here he becomes vulgar and commonplace. Many of them are indeed like that. But there are always exceptions. Some have a unified personality, that is to say, they live their art and are truly generous, fine.

## 7. Prayer and Aspiration

### (1)

What you do has an inevitable and absolute consequence. This is a necessary concept at a given moment of the evolutionary process. It is meant to prevent men from becoming completely egoistic or doing what they do in a totally unconscious manner. There are many who are like that, the majority, I suppose; they follow their impulses and do not ask what consequences their actions will have for themselves and for others. It is good then if someone tells them with a severe air: "Take care, that has consequences which last long, very long." There are religions that rose to warn them: "You will pay for that in another life." "If you commit this sin, you will go into hell for eternity", and so on. That is, however, a most fantastic story that man has invented; still, people are frightened and checked in some way. It

spares them a movement for reflection before they run after their impulses, not always, sometimes the reflection comes after, a little late.

In all religions people who declared that the consequences of Karma are rigorous and who gave these absolute rules, must have done so, I believe, to put themselves in place of Nature, to pull the strings that move ordinary men. For these rules are mental constructions, more or less sincere perhaps, cutting things into bits and telling you: "Do this, do that; it is not this, it is that." People are confused, frightened; In the end they do not know what to do.

What they must do is to get to an upper floor. And they must be given the key to open the door. The key is (1) a sufficiently sincere aspiration, or (2) a sufficiently intense prayer. I said *or*, but it may not be so; there are people who like the one and there are people who prefer the other. But in both there is magic power and one must know how to use them.

There are some who detest prayers. If they entered deep into their heart, they would see that it is pride, even worse than that, vanity. There are people who have no aspiration, they try but they are not able. They are not able, because they have not the flame of the will, nor have they the flame of humility. Both are necessary. To change one's *karma* one needs a great humility and a great will-power.

The Divine Grace counteracts the *karma* wholly; the Grace melts karma, as the sun melts butter. If you have an aspiration sincere enough, or a prayer intense enough you can bring down into you something that will change everything.

(2)

I have already spoken to you of the different planes of consciousness. On the purely material plane (separating it from the vital), it is all absolutely mechanistic: there things follow each other in a rigid chain of cause and effect. If you want to find the cause of a thing, you will have to find the cause of the cause; and if you want to find the effect of a thing you will have to find also the effect of the effect. The causes and effects linked together form a closed ring. Only, into this purely material plane there can intervene and does intervene the vital plane, as for example in the vegetable kingdom.

The vital plane has a totally different determinism, which is its own. And when you bring the vital determinism into physical determinism, that makes a combination which changes everything.

Above the vital plane lies the mental plane. The mental plane too has its own determinism in which all mental things are chained together in a rigorous sequence. Each of these planes has what may be called a horizontal determinism.

But, as I say, there is also a vertical movement. That is, the mental descends into the vital and the vital descends into the physical. Thus there are three determinisms which intervene and produce something that is quite different.

Where the mind intervenes the determinism will necessarily be different from the determinism where it does not intervene. In the higher animal life there is already an intervening mental determinism which is quite different from the determinism on the vegetal plane. Above these planes there are others up to the highest. The highest plane is the plane of absolute freedom.

If you are capable of traversing all these planes in your consciousness, so to say, in a vertical line and reach the highest and then, through this joining up, if you are able to bring down this determinism of perfect freedom into the material determinism, then you change everything. And all the intermediaries also will undergo the change. Because of these changes it will all look like total freedom. For the intervention or the descent of one plane upon another will have unforeseen consequences for the lower one. The higher planes may foresee, but the lower ones cannot. Being unforeseen, things and events have then an air of the absolutely free and the totally unexpected.

It is only when you live consciously and constantly on the highest level, that is to say, the level of the supreme consciousness, that you are able to see that everything is absolutely determined, but at the same time by the very complexity of the intermixture of these determinisms everything is absolutely free. You may call this phenomenon as you like, but it is a kind of absolute determinism and absolute freedom combined. It is the level where there are no contradictions, where all things exist and exist in harmony without contradicting each other.

(3)

Everything is possible. It is a gradual unfolding along a highway, as it were, which is unknown and unknowable to you. In the universe all will be unfolded. But in what order and in what way ? Everything is there absolutely, eternally but static. Everything is going to come out into the material world, naturally, more or less one after another. What course will the unfolding follow ?

Up there, it is the domain of absolute freedom. Who tells you that a sufficiently sincere aspiration, a sufficiently intense prayer cannot change the course of the unfolding ? It means everything is possible. This is one wonderful grace that has been granted to human nature. Only one does not know how to make use of it.

So, in spite of the most absolute determinism in the horizontal line, one can, if one is able to cross it and reach the highest point of consciousness, change what appears to be absolutely determined.

All theories are mere theories, that is to say, mental conceptions which are only representations or images of the reality, they are not the reality at all. When you say "determinism" or "liberty", you say only words. All that is very incomplete, a very feeble description of That which is, in truth, within you, around you, everywhere. And if you are even to begin to understand what the universe is like, you must come out of these mental formulas; otherwise you will never understand.

Indeed, if you live just for a minute only by this absolutely sincere aspiration, this adequately intense prayer, you will know more things than by meditating for long hours.

# III

# Aphoristic Words

## APHORISTIC WORDS

It is in peace that knowledge and power are truly effective.

* *

It is by a quiet, strong, persistent peace that the true victories can be won.

* *

A smile acts upon difficulties as the sun upon the clouds—it disperses them.

* *

To smile at an enemy is to disarm him.

* *

To be concerned for one's happiness is the surest way of becoming unhappy.

* *

To conquer a desire brings more joy than to satisfy it.

* *

Each meditation ought to be a new revelation, for in each meditation something new happens.

* *

Peace and stillness are the great remedy for diseases. When we can bring peace into our cells we are cured.

* *

The body should reject illness as energetically as in the mind we reject falsehood.

* *

Work done in the true spirit is meditation.

* *

It is only when people truly want their consciousness to be changed that their actions also can be changed.

* *

The work done through love and because of love is surely the most powerful.

* *

Let us work as we pray, for indeed work is the body's best prayer to the Divine.

* *

Fear is always a very bad adviser.

* *

You can be entirely free from fear only when you have driven out of you all violence.

* *

Jealousy comes from a narrowness of the mind and a weakness of the heart. It is a great pity that so many are attacked by it.

* *

The more a mind is ignorant the more easily it judges everything it does not know or is incapable of understanding.

* *

When two persons quarrel, always both are in the wrong.

* *

An impulsive person who cannot control himself has a disordered life.

* *

In true courage there is no impatience and no rashness.

* *

He only is never vanquished who refuses to be vanquished.

* *

A noblest courage is to recognise one's faults.

* *

To be above offence or insult makes one truly great.

* *

To speak always the truth is the highest title of nobility.

* *

Heroism is to be able to stand for the Truth in all circumstances, to declare it amidst opposition and to fight for it whenever necessary.

And to act always from one's highest consciousness.

* *

One grows into the likeness of what one loves.

* *

Only he who loves can recognise love. Those who are incapable of giving themselves in a sincere love, will never recognise love anywhere, and the more the love is divine, that is to say unselfish, the less they can recognise it.

* *

There is a deep and True Consciousness in which all can meet in love and harmony.

* *

Concentration upon oneself means decay and death—Concentration on the Divine alone brings life and growth and realisation.

* *

Sincerity is the key of the divine doors.

* *

Without the Divine, life is a painful illusion, with the Divine all is bliss.

* *

To love truly the Divine we must rise above attachments.

* *

To will what God wills—that is the supreme secret.

* *

## *GLOSSARY*

| | |
|---|---|
| *Ahiṁsā* | Non-violence. |
| *Ānanda* | Spiritual ecstasy, delight, bliss. |
| *Āśram* | A community of disciples living with a *guru* (spiritual guide). A centre for the practice of *sādhanā* or *yogic* discipline. |
| *Askesis* (Gr.) | Training, inner discipline. |
| *Āsuric* | Pertaining to the *Asuras*, egoistic demonic beings, sons of Darkness and Division. |
| *Bhakta* | A devotee, a lover of the Divine (God). |
| *Bhakti* | Devotion. |
| *Brahman* | The One beside whom there is nothing else existent; the Absolute. |
| *Dharma* | The natural law and spirit of religion; the law of the function of the nature. |
| *Gītā* | Short form of "*Bhagavadgītā*", the Song Celestial, a Hindu scripture. |
| *Guṇas* | Qualities or fundamental modes of Nature. |
| *Karma* | Action, work; action entailing its consequences. |
| *Kinesis* (Gr.) | Movement, motion. |
| *Mantras* | Words to be reverently repeated or chanted, having a spiritual significance and power. |
| *Nirvāna* | State of Extinction, not necessarily of all being, but of being as we know it; a state of absolute tranquillity, beyond ego and desire. |
| *Ojas* | A primal physical energy supporting all the other energies. |
| *Prakṛti* | Nature; the active and executive energy. |

*Prāṇa* Life; vital force.

*Puranic* Pertaining to the Puranas, later Hindu scriptures, mythological, historical, anecdotal.

*Puruṣa* The Conscious Soul, the true being.

*Rajas* The kinetic principle in Nature, characterised by desire, action and passion.

*Rasa* The essence of delight in things.

*Retas* The seminal fluid.

*Rudra* A fierce and violent godhead of Vedic conception, but with a benevolent aspect: Siva as Destroyer.

*Sādhak (a)* Disciple; a seeker; one who practises yoga.

*Sādhanā* Practice of yoga; a spiritual discipline.

*Samatā* Equality, i.e., a quiet and unmoved mind and vital, untouched and undisturbed by happenings.

*Sattwa* The principle of light and harmony in Nature; the mode of poise, peace, harmony, knowledge and satisfaction.

*Śakti* The Power, the Consciousness-Force of the Divine; the World-Mother.

*Tamas* The principle of obscurity and inertia in Nature.

*Tāntric* Pertaining to the *Tantra*, a special *yogic* system.

*Tapasyā* Spiritual austerity, spiritual effort.

*Upaniṣad* Ancient Indian scripture expounding the secret meaning of the *Veda*, embodying the insights and experiences of seers (*ṛṣis*) concerning the *Ātman* (the true Self) which is the *Brahman* (the Absolute Being).

*Vaishnavism* A movement within Hinduism; the way of devotion to *Vishnu* or *Krishna*.

*Vedantic* — Pertaining to the *Vedānta*, the system of philosophy and spiritual discipline deriving from the *Vedas* (ancient Hindu scriptures) and dealing with the essentials of the divine Knowledge.

*Vicāra* — Concentrated thinking.

*Yoga* — Union with the Divine; the discipline by which one enters through an awakening into an inner and higher consciousness; a systematised effort at self-perfection.

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These passages are taken from:—*Words of the Mother*, 1st, 2nd, and 4th series.

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